











CHRIST

IN

THE WILL, THE HEART, AND THE LIFE.

DISCOURSES.

BY

A. B. MUZZEY.



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DEDICATION.

To my Parishioners, present and former, and to the many generous friends whose kindnesses I can repay only in words, these Discourses, written at various periods of my ministry, and containing imperfections, repetitions, and perhaps incongruities, to which I know they will be indulgent, — offered, as this volume is, more as a heart-token than as laying claim to intellectual merit, and intended chiefly as a slight memorial of my regard for them, — are very respectfully and affectionately inscribed by

A. B. MUZZEY.

NEWBURYPORT, May 1, 1861.

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DISCOURSES.

I.

CHRIST'S BIRTH, AND HUMAN PROGRESS.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON EARTH PEACE, GOOD-
WILL TOWARD MEN. — Luke ii. 14.

THE introduction of the Christian religion upon earth was incomparably the most important event in the annals of humanity. In view of its transcendent influence on the destinies of our race, it is not too much to say, that, from that moment, "old things" passed away, and "all things" became "new." A new light broke on the world; a new spirit penetrated the human heart; and a new power entered society at large. Then commenced the truly golden age, in which the human intellect was to start on an unending career of knowledge and of power, and the whole spiritual world was to pass through a literal regeneration.

Pertinent to that hour was the grand lyric of the heavenly host; and fitting it was that its first strain should be, "Glory to God in the highest." For, whatever praise had been rendered to that great

Being in the past, the highest glory was now due to him. Paganism had furnished examples of his favor to the race ; and for the genius and the graces of good men in all ages his name was to be honored. Especially was glory to be ascribed to him for that Elder Covenant, wherein he revealed himself as Jehovah ; and for the long line of patriarchs, prophets, heroic spirits, and sweet singers, who had shadowed forth his mercies to his chosen people. But now he sends one before whom the brightest of past lights pale away. Not the illuminator of the East alone, but of every region ; not a particular star for some one nation or race, but a midday sun, "the light of the world," has arisen. And if, when the foundations of the earth were laid, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy, the whole heavenly host may well greet Him, at whose coming a new spirit-world is founded. And if the repentance of one sinner causes joy among the angels, now that a Saviour has come, who is to melt all hearts in penitential grief, and lead them on to light and life, well may the celestial choir give forth their fullest shout, "Glory to God in the highest."

Christ came to show men the Father: he bade them turn away from their idol deities, and he pointed straight to that God who is a Spirit, teaching them that he is to be worshipped, on no mountain-height alone, and in no one temple, but in the sacred recesses of each private heart. Before Him you are to pour out your highest adoration ; the

Giver of all good, to him you owe a pæan of gratitude. Here is a Fountain, whose waters can soothe your every sorrow ; and in bereavement, when dear ones are taken from your bosom, and your path is shaded by tribulation, in Jesus you will find peace. "Glory to God in the highest."

With equal lay should praise be sounded out for the gift of "Peace on earth"—peace, not only between God and his children, but between man and man, flowing out in the broad streams of a universal "good-will." Mark these brief clauses : they cover, you find, not only the outward condition and fortunes, but the entire social duty, character, and destiny of the race. What is needed to insure equity, right, and justice between individuals, and between those of every country, caste, and creed upon earth ? What but Christian "peace" ? Before this, the Moloch altar of enmities and wars and fightings, on every scale, large or small, is at once prostrated. "Good-will to men,"—let this be inscribed on each separate heart, and no more would the law be a minister of personal vindictiveness, but a pillar of God-approved justice. Let there be "good-will" in the breasts of kings and princes, and never again would the despot trample on his weaker neighbor, and blot kingdoms from the atlas of God's people. Right, not might, would rule the wide world ; and the feeble and down-trodden would no more be hunted, like the wild beast, but their calls on humanity would awaken a universal and all-emulating sympathy, and a forthcoming relief.

There are some who imagine the evils I advert to are remediless and hopeless. They believe that, as in the past, so in the whole future, war, oppression, and injustice will stain the records of humanity. Pride of birth will scorn the lowly; and rank and titles will sit in the high places, and keep the mass at their footstool. But, if so, what meant those heavenly voices? If the world is in a perpetual bondage to the selfish and malignant passions, why did celestial intelligences hymn forth "Glory to God"? Why this array of means and influences? Why so much done for our extrication from that, in which the author of this expenditure saw and knew that man was irremediably involved? We cannot concede that any form whatever of evil is destined to perpetuity, without dethroning that God, whose ensign is goodness, without annihilating the Father, and leaving man a spiritual orphan.

But no, the angelic host had a truer vision than this. They saw that the Saviour they heralded would be a power, not only to heal the broken-hearted, but to release the captive, to reconcile the alienated and hostile, to save everywhere the lost. They saw that, however its course might be here or there retarded, no human arm could stay its progress forever. If there were Pharisees, binding heavy burdens upon men, so would there be publicans, meek and just men, and good Samaritans, to bind up the bleeding. They saw that the great heart of man would be more and more on

the side of universal peace and good-will. They looked down the vista of the ages, and saw Christian principle advancing, often silently and slowly, but with never-ceasing step. It would convert enemies into friends; it would break down oligarchies, and diffuse civil and political power among the people. It would remove barriers between man and his brother, lifting up the lowest, and opening to them the paths of prosperity and preferment. It would enlighten the most ignorant, and spread moral truth, and a saving health, to earth's utmost bound.

How much of this blessed vision has been already accomplished! Since the birth of Christ, not only have wars diminished, and animosities, social and national, on the whole, largely abated, but institutions to elevate, comfort, and gladden all classes of society, have sprung plentifully up. And not only have the wealthy endowed these institutions, and the honored given them their patronage, but the very humblest have sometimes laid their foundations. The "Savings Bank" — that happy device for increasing the means of those who can accumulate only by little and little, and so guard against an evil day — was originated by an obscure woman. The noble Temperance reform owes its main efficacy to a lowly priest; and we are told that the "Shelter for Foundlings," in Paris, was started by a plain sea-captain, and the "Benevolent Fund," of London, by an undistinguished miniature-painter. Study the history of the great public charities of Christendom, in gen-

eral, and you will find that they have flowed out of the spirit of that nativity chant. Indeed, once plant the stock of human brotherhood, and you are sure ultimately of every good moral fruit. What renders a community quiet, peaceful, observers of law, and friends of good order? The Christian sentiment of "good-will" to all. This it is which makes happy homes; let it enter the hearts of father and mother, parent and child, brother and sister, and they join in the angelic chorus. Filled with love, forbearing and forgiving one another, the light, which fell once on the manger at Bethlehem, falls on their roof, and, however lowly, it becomes divinely resplendent.

And this spirit, going forth from the fireside, enters every other territory, and claims a right there to reign and rule. It breaks down the old partition wall between the sacred and the secular, and makes everything sacred. It enters into the various secular avocations, and it there abjures that pernicious maxim, "Religion is religion, and business is business"; and presses straight into the counting-room and the market-place; and demands that the principles of trade be Christian principles, equitable before God and good men. It is not a sentiment for the sanctuary alone; every house is its temple, and the common work-day routine its service. It crosses the boundaries of sect, party, state, and country, and binds its golden girdle round one and all.

It is true that all this is as yet by no means consummated; even Christian communities are not thoroughly pervaded with the temper I describe. But

no one can go back to the dawn of our holy religion, without hope for the future. Never was an event less significant of its subsequent issues, than the origin of Christianity. A single voice, lifted up in an obscure quarter, testifies against the whole world. A few peasants and fishermen only join this witness; and even they contain among them one persistent sceptic, another a craven denier of his Lord, and a third a traitor. The Master soon dies on the cross; he rises indeed from the tomb, and ascends up to Heaven; and who are left to take up the work so inauspiciously begun? But a hundred and twenty individuals! Yet look at its results. A few weeks only pass, and three thousand souls are added to that little company. And now the word prevails, and spreads mightily. It assails that proud temple, which had been nearly a half-century in building; and the old Hebrew faith, which had stood four thousand years, wastes away before it. That priesthood, who were the awe of their people, are stripped of their vestments; the rabbi, once the corypheus of his nation, becomes an outcast; and Scribe and Pharisee, who claimed the exclusive favor of God, and despised and put to death the lowly Nazarene, are swept before his doctrine, exiles and fugitives the world over. In the infancy of this religion, the Holy Spirit smote the heart of one who was breathing out threatenings and slaughters against Christ and his disciples; a man of illustrious intellect, whose thrilling words made a Roman potentate tremble. Him it changed from a persecutor to a resist-

less advocate ; inspiring those Epistles so cogent in argument, so vivid in illustration, and instinct with so divine a love. From herald to herald, and from age to age, it passed on in a line of triumphs, lifting up the humble, and bringing the proud to its feet. For its sake men counted all things but dross ; they were cast into dungeons, they were stretched on the wheel, and consumed at the stake. Thousands felt its power in their secret heart ; and that heart was turned from sin to the service of God. With a moral electricity it shot through the Church Universal, renovating individuals, and binding the sanctified together in an indissoluble fellowship.

The faith of the crucified Galilean is preached in heathen lands. It at once overthrows their idols and prostrates their altars. For its sake the people burn their pagan books, forsake their magnificent temples, and worship in dens and caves. Princes bow to its sway, and kings, before its power, become subjects. Three centuries only elapse, and the head of the proudest empire, on which the sun ever shone, is converted to this once detested religion. And at this hour, as if to perpetuate a monument, showing that the Gospel is indeed “ the wisdom of God and the power of God,” the traveller sees in old Rome more than one pillar, once surmounted by images of heathen rulers, now adorned by statues of Christian dignitaries. Musing among those eloquent ruins, one feels how truly,

“ A simple stone, or mound of earth
Can summon the departed forth ;

As if a portion of that thought
By which the Eternal Will is wrought,
Whose impulse fills anew with breath
The frozen solitude of Death,
To mortal mind were sometimes lent,
To mortal musings sometimes sent,
To whisper,
Through the wide waste of woe and sin,
Of an immortal origin."

The tidings of good-will to man encountered, it is true, the fiercest opposition from the beginning. But who could withstand long the very Son of God ?

The same angelic presence, which hovered over the cradle of Jesus, has come down through each successive period of his Church. Amid all discouragements, we do know that his great work has gone on, and ever must, with more or less rapidity, go steadily on. In the city of Milan stands a splendid cathedral, whose foundations were laid nearly five centuries ago ; but it is not even yet completed. For long ages the work has sometimes been stationary ; but again, and on the whole, it has gone forward. As I looked on its noble walls, the marble stained in its lower courses by time, but, as the eye rose toward its turrets, each course growing purer and purer, I read on it the history of our religion ; now advancing, and now seemingly at a stand, but, in a broad view, always progressive. There is no particular heart so hard as never to be touched by the voice of Jesus ; there is no custom or institution at variance with his benign doctrine, but feels more or less distinctly his earnest rebuke. The veriest despot

on the globe, as he musters his soldiery to repress the uprisings of freedom, and tread out the spark of that heaven-descended fire, knows and feels that all Christendom, so far as it *is* Christendom, frowns on the act, and that the " God of peace and good-will " utters his thunders of warning.

We may, and often do, see portents of evil ; Christianity has had in the past, now has, and ever will have, not only open opponents, but unwise, and sometimes unsanctified, advocates. The agrarian, the communist, the fierce disorganizer, we must expect. In times of great agitation, out of the fire there must needs come the viper. But the Lord reigneth ; and he will overrule the very wrath of man for some ultimate good. The great stream of historic faith, starting in that little rill from the mountain of Judæa, is still flowing on, its banks becoming wider and wider, and its bosom freighted with the sure ark of God.

Let then the lyric of Bethlehem be the cheer of our particular hearts. It needs but that Christ be enthroned in each single soul ; then would his chariot-wheels roll in triumph through communities and through nations. Think we all his great thoughts, kindle his divine emotions in each separate breast, lead more and more of us his holy and beneficent life, and the race, singly and collectively, can be saved. The song of the Nativity is simple, yet mighty. Let its burden be taken up by all on whose ear it shall fall, and ere long every people, kindred, sect, and circle would become instinct with its

spirit, and the multitude of the heavenly host would receive a glad response from a multitude on earth. So let it be ; and the high aspiration for personal piety, and universal peace, and a measureless goodwill, shall then be an earnest of coming realities ; and heaven and earth, so long and so mournfully parted, shall at last become one.

II.

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN HUMAN NATURE.

WHICH SHOW THE WORK OF THE LAW WRITTEN IN THEIR
HEARTS.—Romans ii. 15.

THE Apostle is contrasting the condition of the Jews with that of the Gentiles. He assures the former that the Mosaic law, written on tables of stone, will not inure to their salvation unless they obey its moral behests. "God," he continues, "is no respecter of persons. Not the hearers, but the doers of the law, are justified by him." The Gentiles are often more truly obedient to the great moral law than the Jews; and they thus show that the work of that law is written, not upon stone, but upon the universal heart of man.

The purport of this view is, that religion does not depend for its fundamental evidence and its truth on a written book, but on the testimony of the human soul. Beyond question, the result of all true investigation must be a firm faith in Revelation; and the importance of this faith can hardly be exaggerated. Still, it is not enough to rely on this alone. The Bible is a gift for which we can

never be too grateful. The life of Jesus Christ, especially, is, of itself, proof of the everlasting depth of those great truths which he taught. His sacrifice on the cross stands out, the miracle of all miracles, bringing God, as manifested in his Son, down to earth, and lifting man up, in his sin and his plea for mercy, to heaven. The crown of thorns, set on that brow in mockery, was studded with celestial jewels; and the mimic sceptre, placed in his hands, symbolized the unlimited and illimitable extent of his spiritual dominion. To the believer, Jesus Christ is the focus of all true light; his hope, his confidence, his everlasting joy.

But unhappily all do not believe firmly in the Gospel. Not a few, with honest minds, and a sincere desire to have faith in spiritual things, are troubled with doubts and fears on this subject. In conversing with an intelligent layman, he said to me, "I think you preachers would do far more good by going down to the foundations of all faith, in your sermons, than by controverting the creeds and doctrines of each other. For," he added, "you do not know what multitudes in this day are troubled with doubts on the whole matter of religion."

In this inquisitive age, some imagine that, if they can invalidate the evidence of the Scriptures, they shall destroy the corner-stone of religion itself. Infidelity sometimes battens on the contradictions of the Bible, derides its miracles, flouts the clergy, and exults in the sins of church-members, and the

folly and incredulity of the weak-minded Christian. And it conceives itself able thus to tear down the pillars of all religion whatever.

And some, with honest minds, and a sincere desire to believe in spiritual things, are troubled with doubts and fears lest they may be deceived. "How do we know," ask such, "that the Bible is indeed true? It contains many things hard to understand; it speaks of supernatural beings, and of strange events; it is so unlike every other book, that one hardly knows what to think of its contents. And what if the whole volume, or even any part of it, should fail to prove genuine? It must follow, according to the ground taken by most Christians, that their faith is a delusion; and the whole fabric of their religion then falls with a fearful crash.

"True, the preacher affirms that religion is a reality; he never expresses a doubt on this subject. But may not his confidence, after all, be unfounded, — the result of a merely professional bias? Is it not possible that these very prayers, and these solemn services of the Church, are a vain thing, — uttered on the empty air, heard by no being higher than man, 'the baseless fabric of a vision'?"

Now, it is to meet this state of mind that Paul says in our text, "The work of the law," that is, the moral law, "is written," not on an outward page alone, but "on the heart." To this interior handwriting I would now appeal. I would present it as of itself an evidence of the truth of religion.

Faith itself, the very circumstance that the whole race, Gentile as well as Jew, have, in their inmost hearts, a persuasion of the existence of a spirit-world, is proof that that world does exist.

We are led to believe in a material world by the senses. And the entire creation illustrates the great doctrine, that our every faculty, capacity, and organ point to objects which correspond with them. The beautiful mechanism of the eye, for example, presupposes a use for that organ, that is, things to be seen. The ear implies sounds; the sense of smell, odors; the touch, things to be felt; and the taste is itself evidence of objects adapted to the palate. So perfect is this law, that, where a sense is not needed, there it has not been bestowed. In the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, a region of perpetual darkness, where the eye would be useless, the fishes are destitute of sight; and they constitute, according to Professor Agassiz, a distinct race.

The law in question holds true in the moral world. Nothing is there made in vain. Man is endowed with certain sentiments, principles, and capacities; and they each and all point to their corresponding objects. Conscience is not a useless endowment; it finds before it the great moral distinctions, good and evil, right and wrong, which demand its exercise. The affections are met by objects suited to call them forth. God has placed in the bosom of the mother a fountain of tenderness; and behold its object,—the helpless babe, the prattling infant, the sturdy boy, the adventurous youth, the man in his prime. He

is still, and ever, her child ; in his budding virtue, the pride of her heart ; in his wayward impulses, her dear son ; loved on, loved ever. And, though he be called away from her embrace, her affections still cling to his angel form ; so has a mother's love its appropriate object.

In the same way, the simple existence of a capacity to love God is proof that there is a God. The law which runs through the material, and through the moral worlds, is not suddenly violated when we enter the spiritual province. No, to be consistent, we must admit that faith itself is "the substance," that is, the foundation, "of things hoped for" ; that it is "the evidence of things not seen." Before we open the Bible, a light thus rays out from the human heart, which lighteth "every man," not the believer in the Gospel alone, but "every man that cometh into the world."

An idea has existed in all ages of a being, or of beings, superior to man. Every people have had this idea, more or less distinct. It has led men to worship fire, the sun, images of wood and stone, heroes, and deified men. "The invisible things of the godhead are clearly seen" on every page of human history. And what does this great universal idea indicate ? That there is an object corresponding to this conception ; that there must be an ever-living, eternal God.

The human soul, what view shall we take of that ? The unbeliever tells us that soul is a Bible word, a word which, if we obliterate that volume, loses all

meaning. But unbelief, though it may invalidate the Scriptures, has never succeeded in blotting out the soul. You may change the word, but the thing itself — that vital, hoping, striving, world-conquering faculty — no earthly power can annihilate. It smiles on the wreck of all things else ; and lives down alike the scoffer and the doubter, the bold and the timid inquirer, — itself an evidence of the reality of the objects toward which it aspires.

In like manner we may derive proofs of a future life from the law written on the heart. Not only have those blest by revelation, accepted the doctrine of immortality, but gleams of its light have issued from every nation and people on earth. From Zoroaster and Confucius, from the classic and refined Cicero, Socrates, Seneca, and Plato, down to the most benighted dweller on the Feejee Islands, there have been glimmerings of a world to come. The “underworld” of the Babylonian and the Chaldee, the Elysium and Tartarus of ancient Rome, the future hunting-ground of our aboriginal Indian, all point to a foundation in some grand reality. Why do men believe in a future state at all? Why have they the capacity for that belief, if there be nothing without, and beyond, us corresponding to that capacity? To suppose that we can be deceived and disappointed in our expectation of an hereafter, is to contend that the eye might have been created without light by which to see, or the ear all curiously fashioned, and then no sound ever uttered to call forth its power. If nature does not war

against herself, then must there be a life beyond the grave.

So clear, indeed, is this doctrine, that Judaism does not attempt formally to teach it, nor did our Saviour himself ever inculcate it in direct words. He everywhere treats it as an established belief, and proceeds to other and still higher truths. He relies on the instincts of the human soul for its evidence ; and regards it as so manifest, that none can rationally doubt its reality.

But here the question will be raised : “ If religion be indeed so incontrovertibly true, why have there been such egregious errors in regard to it ? Look at the theology even of the Christian world, — at its incongruous features, its irrational doctrines, — and say if they do not shake your faith in the whole subject of religion. Then, too, if there be anything in religion, why do not all men agree in regard to it ? These divisions and strifes and animosities between Christians bring discredit on Christianity itself.”

But, I answer, these errors and controversies, instead of invalidating, do in truth confirm, the reality of religion. Men are not so interested and excited about things destitute of a foundation. There is an intense desire to ascertain something in relation to God ; and in their zeal for it, men rush into extremes and errors on the nature of that Being. The soul longs for some light on a future state ; and, in its earnest gaze, it sometimes mistakes shapes and shadows for the true vision of immortal life. In their warmth, men contend sharply on these great

truths, and would seem, at first view, by their dissensions to nullify all evidence on the subject.

Yet this very zeal, and these diverse creeds, show that the great theme of controversy must be itself a reality. Two individuals may contend about a trifle; two sects or parties might be wrought up by a delusion. But the whole race can never be thus deceived. What Jew and Gentile, Mahometan and Pagan, no less than Christian, all think, speak, and write upon cannot be a brain-born phantom. Sooner may the sweet notes of the vernal birds, which so thrill the spirit as they chant of opening spring and summer's approaching glory, be a delusion, and spring never to come,—nay, the ear hear no vocal presage of its coming,—than the great soul of humanity be mocked by its aspirations toward God, and its yearnings for a spirit-spring in the heavens.

Regarded, indeed, in their true aspect, there is not an error on the subject of religion, however gross, which is not a witness to its essential truth. The simple fact that men “seek the Lord,” and “feel after him,” if haply they may find him, is evidence clear and irrefutable that he is not far from any one of us. It must be, that he responds to these mighty throbbings of the universal heart, and that in him we do indeed “live and move and have our being.” Every false doctrine is the shadow of some true one; every error is the outcropping of a deep, underlying bed of truth.

Nay, I go further: the false not only intimates, but, better than all positive reasonings and argu-

ments, proves the true. We have our Paleys and Lockes, our Newtons and Priestleys and Butlers, who give us what are called "the evidences of Christianity." But, strong as may be this array of evidences and arguments, there is more weight still in the fact that men, in view of conceived errors and truths in religion, set out to frame any argument at all on the subject. Whence came these notions of God and the soul's immortality? They were on earth before Christ appeared; and the very means used to establish a revelation through him shows that the Divine law was already written on the heart. So that the mere existence of Christianity points down to the foundations of all religion, laid in the very soul from its creation.

Natural religion may include errors; but the mere fact that there *is* a natural religion in the world proves there must be a substratum on which it rests. The faith in Divine Providence may be blended with superstition; but that does not overthrow it. The faith itself shows that there must be a basis for the doctrine. Indeed, there is no form of popular superstition that does not preach of a rational, well-founded belief in eternal things. In the thick fog of witchcraft, magic art, fortune-telling, attempts, by whatever means, to pry into the counsels of God and the future, there are tokens of great realities lying beneath these delusions. In every age, and under every degree of civilization and enlightenment, there have been beliefs like those in mesmerism and "spiritual" communications. And

these all take the stand as witnesses for religious truth. They may be themselves illusions, some of them the grossest delusions ; but they still point to latent realities, to things higher and better than they touch, things which we are toiling all our lives to find. They intimate

“ truths that wake
To perish never ”

Considered in this aspect, what once perhaps disturbed our faith, will serve now to strengthen and establish it. Fanaticism, and the strange deeds done in the name of religion, should not throw doubt upon it ; they only indicate the value and the trustworthiness of that which stirs the mind up to fanaticism. No light thing could drive a rational being to the frenzy of bigotry, intolerance, and persecution even to death, for his mere opinion on theological subjects. The absurd and demoralizing tenets of the Mormon, instead of destroying the credibility of all religion, bear witness to the depth and power of that mighty principle. Infidelity implies always its opposite. The very oath of the blasphemer preaches of that dread Being whose name he thus profanes. France, in the mad atheism of her Revolution, was giving testimony to the existence and the awful retributions of the ever-living God not less distinct and solemn than she does now, or ever did, by her splendid cathedrals and her thousand chapels, that chant forth his praises. The synagogue of the Israelite, the mosque of the Turk, the temple of the Hindoo,

no less than the Christian sanctuary, testify to that eternal Being toward whom they all point.

Be this then our confidence, that amid all the errors and doubts and unbeliefs of the race, amid the revolutions of ecclesiastical affairs, while forms change and vanish, and rituals are now observed, and now pass into neglect, while all the institutions of religion fluctuate, religion itself does not wane, or falter. Its accidents and surroundings may waste away, its manifestations may take new and unanticipated forms, but faith itself still abides, "a presence which is not to be put by."

Amid the crumbling of its ancient pillars, the corner-stone lies firm and indestructible. As we look to the dim future, we may ask more light on its deep mysteries from Christianity, or more from nature and Providence; and we may tremble lest we be at last "in darkness lost, the darkness of the grave." But fear not, O man! for thou hast the witness in thyself. Thy very desire, thy very hope to live again, shows that over thee, now and ever,

"thy Immortality
Broods like the day."

Yes, perish all else, faith is its own evidence. The gates of death shall not prevail against it. Here, in our own conscious breasts, it stands up, giving testimony for God and Christ. Silent indeed it is: no voice is heard, no noise or pomp assure its presence; but it is a witness to eternal things, prompt, clear, unimpeachable. God help us to receive its testi-

mony ; and so to live, that our convictions shall every day gain new strength, that heaven shall stand out to us more and more clear, our faith in Christ be dear to us as the apple of the eye, and our religion show itself to be a reality, by purifying our hearts, mastering sense and self, and working always by love !

III.

WILL AND DESIRE.

WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE? — John v. 6.

WHEN the great Messenger of God was on earth, preaching by the wayside, and doing wonderful works as he went, a throng of the diseased pressed round him, in the hope that a ray of his power would shine upon and heal them. The timid and the confident, age, manhood, and youth, however distempered, expected mercy, could they but catch the ear of this "Son of David." But not all were restored; from individuals, and from whole cities, he would sometimes turn away, and leave them in the bonds of their malady. And why was this? Not because he was insensible to their needs, not either because they were beyond the scope of his miraculous power. No, there was a condition on their part, without the fulfilment of which they were not to be healed. It was this: there must be faith in Jesus Christ, a concentration of purpose; in one word, the moral will must be fastened on the worker, or no healing was effected.

In the case before us, why did our Saviour put this particular question to the impotent man, "Wilt

thou be made whole?" He must have known that the man desired to be put into the pool and healed. The very fact of his lying on its borders was proof of that desire. Why then this interrogation, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

There is a vital distinction between willing and desiring. Had the impotent man merely wished to be healed, Jesus would have passed by him, and left him as he was. But he did more than this: he willed to be restored; and, now the miracle was wrought, the man took up his bed, and walked.

We also, my brethren, morally impotent, disabled by sin, are in the very plight of that commiserated being: our feet touch the brim of those waters that gush up in Christ to everlasting life. We desire — every one surely is sometimes so touched with a sense of his spiritual maladies as to desire — to be immersed in the healing element. But with many of us that is all; and therefore it is that here we lie, prostrate with moral iniquity; and we have lain for years, it may be, impotent and motionless. We have never yet willed to be made whole.

But why will not the desire suffice to quicken and restore us? How does it come short — and so far short too — of the will?

In the first place, our desires are inefficient, because they are to a very great degree involuntary. Turn your thoughts inward, and recall the past. What a train of shapes and shadows are at once brought before you! You are a husband and

father, perhaps ; and you have desired wealth, so that you need be anxious no more for those depending on your toils and successes ; or that ease and luxury might be your inexhaustible portion. You have desired honors, distinction, praise, and power. What aspirations, what dreams, what visions, the offspring of folly, unbidden guests, have flitted through your mind, whether for delight or for torment. But the will was not in them, and hence they passed away.

Desire often takes the form of evil ; it is yoked involuntarily to imagination, and hurried by it into forbidden paths. Dark spirits enter our chambers of imagery ; no man is so pure as, at once and forever, to exorcise these grim visitants. But is there sin in every flashing thought of wrong ? Nay,

“ Evil into the mind of God or man
May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
No spot or blame behind.”

But approve it, suffer your desires to rest where you know there is pollution, then you give scope to the will, and then you stand convicted of guilt.

Desires are not seldom evanescent, and on this account ineffective. They dance before the deluded eye vague as the hues of the prism. The will is fixed, calm, and steady, and therefore it is influential. Desire is the fitful meteor, beginning at no point and rushing to no end. The will is a sun, serene and steadfast ; and as that mighty luminary is subject to the measurements of the

patient astronomer, so is this inward light an ever-present and a trustworthy object. A desire to be released from the bondage of some sinful habit may be called up suddenly by a pang of remorse, and hence be as transient as the occasion that awakened it. To will such deliverance must be a work of deliberation, the result of many previous processes, of comparison, compunction, decision, and made effective by reason of its permanance.

Then, too, desire is usually passive, and therefore easily enslaving. Viewed in this aspect, it is subject to an influence beyond and above itself, so that it can do nothing. A viper is on our hand; the will is the only power able to shake it off, and leave us safe and free. It alone can deliver us from the excitements, and exhaustion, and the servitude of evil, and establish us in Christian liberty.

We perceive, hence, that desires do not necessarily yield any good fruit. Aspirations for moral perfection spring up plentifully in the soul; yet how few of them mature into action. Blossoms abound, but the fruit falls in an unripe state. We ask, and receive not, because we ask amiss; we only desire, in faint accents, in broken sentences, in the words of the sleeping man's speech. We seek to enter the kingdom, but we do not will it, and hence do not strive, and so we come short of it.

The difference between will and desire, we may now see, is not, as many imagine, one of degree alone. It is deep, inherent, and radical. Dr. South

has well said, "A wish is properly the desire of a man who is sitting or lying still; but an act of the will is a man of business vigorously going about his work." The one is essentially passive, the other active. Desire contemplates the heights of life's moral Alps, and would fain ascend them; but labor is needed, toil is inevitable; it faints at the prospect, and remains in the valley. The will looks the difficulties steadily in the eye; and though steepes and crags and ice and chills be there for terrors, it sets itself resolutely to the task, tramples on each fresh obstacle, and at last reaches the proud summit.

The moral will alone is successful, because it aims at things near and practicable. We often desire impossibilities,—to be saints and seraphs at the moment. A thought tells us this cannot be; and the wide space between the aspiration and the result perhaps leaves us despondent and inert. If you say, "Go to, let me build a city, and a tower, whose top may reach unto Heaven," the project is a chimera; God will confound your language, and Babel will be the end of it. But if you fix upon some one good thing to be done, an impure passion to be overcome, or a good principle you would establish, and will that precise object, no more, no less, your scheme is practicable; and according to the strength of your determination will be your success in its execution.

Another point of distinction is this. Desire looks only at objects; the will considers means and efforts. Your sympathies, let us suppose, are excited by a

tale of sorrow. O, you wish all evil like this were banished from the world, the sick all healed and the poor filled with plenty. This is a mere object, — it is a beautiful spectacle ; but it is a garden suspended in the air : its flowers are an illusion, its fruits, the apples of Sodom. But walk to the house of a poor neighbor, turn your will on some particular mode of relieving this single person, in his or her peculiar straits, and now fancy is dismissed, common sense comes in, judges coolly, plans methods, follows on to results, and wisdom and charity at last meet together, and the sun goes down on a good deed done.

Now, then, it may be affirmed that all success in things either sacred or secular depends primarily upon force of will. Who is the affluent merchant ? Not he who has merely dreamed of wealth, and indulged vague desires to possess it. Such visions have flitted across the minds of thousands, and they were all barren, dead branches of a dead stock. The successful man willed to be rich. An individual died in this country, leaving, it is said, a fortune of some twenty millions ; and what was his history. He paid his passage across the Atlantic, while yet a boy, by singing to the master of the ship. He landed in a city whose splendid structures he saw men admiring. “ I too,” said the youth, “ will yet build a wonder, and it shall stand too on this very spot.” The passing years saw him toil and save and adventure and amass ; and he did at length build a wonder, and on that same spot, and why ? Because of the force of his will.

Who is this man whose name stands so high on the roll of literary fame? Is it one who in his early days simply wished he were distinguished as a scholar or an author, and there rested? No, the will was aroused; determination possessed the young man; academic shades, college walls, the midnight lamp, all ministered to that one purpose; and behold the triumphs of the man.

But is the treasury of human nature exhausted by gain or renown? No, man has a spiritual force, a moral will; and what if the whole power of this inward storehouse were turned to the forthcalling of that? Is the language too strong which affirms, that if a man so will, if he come with this force unto Jesus Christ, "he is a new creature"? There is that within us over which mere desires, spiritually regarded, are often powerless; but on which the moral will is never steadily concentrated without effecting an ultimate regeneration. We have, nearly all of us, an ideal of the true Christian. We do see at times for what we were created; and poorly, miserably do we feel that we are accomplishing our vocation. Between our ideal and our actual, between what we would be and can be and what we are, there rolls a fearful gulf. How shall we cross it? That question sounded daily in the heart wakes up at last the moral will. And now we determine; we plunge in; hope buoys us up and wafts us on; more and more our possible becomes real; and in the end the peril is over, the shore reached, and the soul safe in God.

Now a man who does not thus seize the sacred ideal of life, and hold it fast, and approximate its actuation, is always a vassal of sin, sold to guilt, in the bond of iniquity, in jeopardy of death. Desires may visit him; the thought may ever and anon be forced on his mind, that his principles are unstable, his affections for God and man torpid, and his life shrunken, weak, and miserable. He wishes it were otherwise; he would fain repent and live; but to-morrow's sun will melt the light snow-flake of desire; the ideal will again flee away, and the actual possess and overmaster him.

But take an opposite case; take a young man who, in the ruddy dawn of his being, desires, and then wills, to unfold himself as the son of a divine Father. Do you doubt his course? See it imaged in the gallant ship. How he trims his canvas; how she catches each holy breeze! Now, it may be, becalmed, yet not disheartened; now amid gales of wind and mountain waves, yet fearing not; for the helm is in his own hand. His will is right; a power from God is pledged; a voice whispers, "Deliverance is certain, the haven is nigh." Behold the fulfilment and the issue,—a good citizen, a wise man, a model Christian; the hoary head is crowned with glory, and the end of that man is peace.

Fain would we that the company of such were great. How shall this be? How is the moral will thus roused, thus sustained, and made divinely triumphant?

First, there must be thought. The unreflecting

may desire, but they cannot will. He who thinks little, always fails; he is the child of to-day, and its events master him. The dominion of the will lies in its steady respect to the future; and this can be paid only by the heedful. Michel Angelo once said, "Contemplation is the only food which properly nurtures the mind; it is the nurse of high and grand conceptions." In his solitude he wrote, "Here I am fed with angels' food; the thunder speaks to my ear with the voice of ages; the winds come rushing with almighty power; they talk of nature; and what is nature but the spirit of God filling man with inspiration." Be you thus enamoured of lone thought; bend your whole soul to heavenly consideration; and there shall grow up in your breast a force of will which no hardship can daunt, no enemy overcome.

Have faith in your moral capacities. Hopkins would say, "The will is unable, till changed by a superhuman power, to do anything pleasing to God." Astounding proposition! The human will free in respect to sinful acts, but bound in respect to every good work! Both Scripture and philosophy repudiate the idea. Yet how many up to this hour practically adopt this very belief. "Can we will?" they unbelievably ask. Can we not will? Is it compulsion that makes us hug these chains of iniquity? Nay; "Ye will not come unto me," said Jesus Christ. Never, ye cannot. So say reason and justice; so must our own hearts say, else there is no healing Bethesda for us.

To faith must be joined endeavors. If the body and the intellect gain their vigor, and keep it, only through exercise, why should not the will? To him who strives it is as obedient as clay to the potter. Let there be hearty, sustained effort, and our nature is all plastic, modelled as by the Divinity. What steadiness of will have some who work in the dark caverns of guilt. We had lately a case of fifteen years of crime wholly undetected. How do revenge and malice and envy and jealousy cling, as with a death-grasp, to their fell purposes. Will you, a denizen of Christ's high realm, do less than they?

Finally, in the culture of moral determination, we need constant communion with God. From Him all power proceeds; to Him must the soul flee in its every extremity. Secret streams are ever flowing down from that sacred mount. They would fain mingle with the thoughts of our pillow and our path; and who can tell what high resolves, what adamant firmness, they give to the heart that lies open to them. Ask, then, and fear not; ask as for your life; not in mere desires, fitful and faltering, but with a fixed purpose; ask, and as God lives, the Holy Spirit will be given; — more than you now hope, more even than you imagine, you shall evermore receive.

Two things, and I close. If the desire to do evil spring up within you, let it not lead on to the will; for in this lies sin. A passing vision of impurity you cannot perhaps exclude; but the purpose of ill-doing you can avert. Instantly, therefore, annihilate the very thought of iniquity. Cherish a wrong desire,

steel consciously the heart, put down with a finger's weight the power of conscience, and already you are lost. Crush the bud of impure inclination, or soon the will — that deadly nightshade when corrupt — will bear you down to perdition.

And, for your good desires, arrest and detain them. Prize the aspiration to be perfect ; but never put your trust in it. Give not sleep to your eyes until you have evoked the guardian will. The great sculptor of old pursued once his task with chisel and lamp until the day broke, because his servant came not as usual to summon him to repose. Be the will your ever-trusted servant ; put no confidence in momentary feelings ; they delude, they mislead, they betray. Around you can see, within you must see, that the hope of humanity hangs, under God, on individual self-determination. Without that, unless thou wilt to be made whole, Christ will not speak thee into spiritual soundness. But fasten thine eyes on him ; concentrate every inward energy on Christ and his salvation, and then thy impotence shall be turned into an unearthly strength. In the conscious dignity of a strong man thou shalt rise ; and through the path of life, and up to the gate of Heaven, full of spiritual vigor and radiant with an imperishable hope, onward shalt thou walk.

IV.

THE KNOWN, AND THE UNKNOWN, CHRIST.

NO MAN KNOWETH THE SON, BUT THE FATHER. — Matthew xi. 27.

HAPPY had it been for the Christian world had they in all ages accepted this plain, unalterable truth. What strifes, long, desperate, sometimes even unto blood, might have been prevented by a frank confession, that the height and breadth and depth of Jesus Christ never can be known by mere mortals. Many a conflict between Catholic and Protestant, I believe, would have been avoided had the Church and the State believed those words of Christ, "No one knoweth" — can know — "the Son, but the Father."

And we of this age, not willing to receive this truth, pronounce in our metaphysical formularies that Christ is thus, or thus, precisely; no more, no less; an exact third of a Trinity, equal in all things, to the letter, with the eternal God; or that he was only a man like ourselves, born as we are, living as we live, and dead once and forever to this world. Or, perchance, we place him at some point on the scale between these extremes; so high, so low, meted and bounded by our vast learning or our sharp logic.

Brethren, I believe this is not the true way to deal with the great Redeemer of mankind. Before he can truly save the Church or the individual, — reconciling us to the Father, uniting the whole human family in one, and making us thorough, genuine, practical Christians, — we must forego this curious temper ; we must cease to anatomize our Saviour, and humbly rest content in the conclusion, that no one can know the Son, except the Father.

How, indeed, are we ever, by our utmost striving, to locate and measure this august Being ? No illustration strikes me as more pertinent to our relations to Christ than this. As when we look on the full-orbed moon, we see only that side of it which is turned toward us, but never that which is turned from us, so it is in looking metaphysically at Christ. The side turned toward us, by his manifestation while on earth, is luminous and comprehensible ; but the side he did *not* manifest we can no more see than we can see the averted and ever-hidden hemisphere of the moon.

You may say, he affirms of himself plainly, “ I and my Father are one.” But does this explain his whole nature, rank, and relations ? In the first place we do not know the Father fully and entirely. We know enough of him to see his infinite power, wisdom, and love ; and enough to lead us to trust in and obey Him with our whole heart. But who, by searching, can find out the Almighty to perfection ? Who knoweth his way in the immensity of the universe ? We can only say, as we stand on the

heaven-touching mountain, or toss on the surging main, or pluck the beauteous rose, "Lo, God is here." And his stupendous ongoings in the march of history, or his minute providences, as when — greatest of mysteries! — he touches the tender mother, taking the bloom from her cheek, arresting her never-weary arm, and calling a fond husband and a circle of orphans to stand by her grave, — ah, who can fathom that great deep?

And now, when our Saviour makes himself one with this mysterious being, how should we know *him*?

If you take the position that we do comprehend the Father, — that he is fully revealed in Nature, Providence, or the Scriptures; that we understand him perfectly, when he is disclosed to us as our Father, — we are still called to elucidate that peculiar relation in which Christ affirms he stood to him. "I and my Father are one." He speaks of God as his Father in a special sense; and well he might, for he was his born son, the only-begotten Son of the Father. It was in no universal, or common acceptation that, in his last filial address on earth to that exalted Being, he used the significant terms, "as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." These words open up a mine of inexhaustible riches; — they reveal a spiritual breadth in Christ's connection with God, which the confiding and grateful heart joyously accepts, but the laboring intellect can never span.

If, to interpret the phrase, "I and my Father are one," we cite that other, "the Father is greater than I," we are not then qualified to compass the whole nature of Christ. In many respects, we do not know what Christ is ; though we do know, it is clear, certain things which he is not. He is not the Supreme God ; the New Testament is full of testimony to that point. "Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is God." "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father." "I can of mine own self do nothing." "The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." "The glory which thou gavest me, I have given them." "All power is given me in heaven and in earth ;" — a truth verified at the raising of Lazarus, when he looked up to the Father, thanked him for hearing his prayers, and added, that he asked, for their sakes who stood by, that they might believe. And what were they to believe ? Not that he was the Supreme God, but, "that thou hast sent me." And, think, moreover, of his praying to himself, and such prayers too ? Who shall dare to say, that the throne of heaven was vacant, while Christ was here on earth ? Or, that the God of gods died on the cross ? But, though he is not equal to the Father in power and glory, — that is, possessed of infinite attributes, — yet his attributes are to us unlimited and immeasurable. His union with the Father can be compared with no standard within our knowledge. The Father was

greater than the Son, — every father must be so, — but who can tell precisely how much greater? Who will unwind, thread by thread, the golden band that girdled them in one?

It is easy, I know, to say that all which marks Christ is his superior inspiration; that in every other respect he was precisely like us. But where is the proof that he was precisely like us, except in the degree of his inspiration? He was not brought into this world as we are; his soul was not — if the Bible is good evidence — united to the body just as ours is. If his nature was the same as ours, then we have only in his life an example, and in his death one of the martyrdoms, so common, and often so ineffective, in the world's history. His countrymen were astonished at his wisdom, and acknowledged he had "never learned letters." He was not taught, as we are, but was a teacher even in his childhood; and his own mother was his pupil and disciple. He received no instruction or aid from any mortal being; he looked up to the Father for everything, and said to him what no other man, if you call him a mere man, has ever dared to say of himself, in relation to God, "Glorify thou me with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was."

But, admitting that he was only an inspired man, he received, we are told, "the Spirit without measure." Will you define this language? What is it to be endowed with light, aid, fellowship, and communion with God, to a measureless extent? Well may we veil our spirits in such a presence, and pour

out our veneration on that exalted and boundless participant with the eternal Father!

Yet, I am not satisfied with that view which makes our Lord only an inspired man. If he was this only, he falls to the level of the ordinary Christian martyr. I think his claims, his language, and his whole life and character, went to draw a line of demarcation between him and our race.

Look at his claims. How continually he contrasts himself with all others. "Ye are from beneath,—I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." And these distinctions were not confined to the Pharisees, or to Gentiles, or to any other special class. He separates himself from his very disciples. "I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet." Was their Lord, the Lord of Life, and Prince of Glory, on a level in any sense with them? Was he, like his disciples, a mortal and comprehensible being? "I am the vine, ye are the branches." And what is the vine but the disseminator of all growth, vigor, life, to each separate branch? Though the vine includes the branches, the branches do not include the vine? In one sense, the branches belong, it is true, to the vine; but only as inferior to, and dependent wholly upon it.

We see, indeed, that his bosom friends, in their very nearest approach to him, saw, heard, knew him not. They only caught glimpses of his interior and true life; and but a ray of sunshine, here and there, fell on their darkened hearts; a bloom sprung up only in patches of those deep woods; his course

flowed on at their side, a lonely river, in dark, irresponsible, unbroken wilds.

I remark next, that, while he professed himself of a rank and personality higher than ours, his direct and his most incidental language alike accord with this claim. "All power is given me in heaven and in earth," — were these words consistent with any low, rationalistic view of Christ? Nay, they place him at the summit of all created spiritual elevations; below only that Omnipotent one, who gave him this transcendent power. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." Nor ever would know; for his daily aliment was divine; he ate honey from the very rock of God. If he opened his lips, the word of God flowed full and graciously from them. "I am the resurrection and the life," — this sublime enunciation falls on the earth-bound soul like a strain from the skies; it hovers over and around us, a voice as of the Lord God, heard of old among the trees in Eden, a majestic presence, we cannot dispel.

But why multiply these citations? The whole life of Christ is enveloped in the same holy mystery. He dwells constantly in a supernal region, face to face with the living God. Take any one of those sublime utterances: "He that confesseth me before men, him will I confess before my Father in Heaven." "When the Son of man cometh in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." How they lift us at once above earth and its earthliness, and encircle us with an unutterable dignity and majesty!

And there is nothing either pompous or strained in the language. In Seneca or Plato, in Moses or Paul, or even in the loved and elevated John, this language would seem presumptuous and arrogant, not to say impious. But in Christ it seems entirely befitting, in harmony with his whole demeanor. There is a vastness in all his conceptions, a grandeur of feeling, a breadth of purpose, which show him to be truly one with the Father ; show it as clearly as the stilling of the waves and the raising of the dead. When he addresses those around him, he manifests a knowledge of the human heart, which, if it were not so familiar to us, would startle and overwhelm us. He does not speak to the words of men, nor to their acts and professions, but to their most secret motives, thoughts, and feelings. His penetration into character discloses a power like that of the great Searcher of hearts. As we listen to him, we seem to hear the distant roar of the mighty ocean breaking on some far-off shore. As he pierces in, and still in, — a light which no darkness can hide, — vain, we feel, are all attempts to deceive that almost omniscient one. The Son knoweth all mortals, but “ no man knoweth the Son.”

Offices and powers we usually ascribe to God he often takes to himself, and without the slightest apparent assumption ; he calls himself “ the light of the world ; ” he speaks of judging the world, of giving everlasting life, and of awarding their opposite conditions to the righteous and the wicked ; and that, not as a strange work, but one accordant with

his whole conduct, character, and life. He had not our human love of approbation ; compare him in this respect with John, Paul, and the best of mere men. He was not selfish like us, but disinterested like God himself. His magnanimity is not human, but divine ; his tenderness to the afflicted is like that of the all-pitying Father ; and his love of the fallen, the oppressed, the erring and lost, is broad as the globe, and high as heaven. “ God,” we read in the Scriptures, “ is love ; ” how deep is the well ! Verily, without Christ we could not draw its life-giving, never-failing waters.

The incomprehensibleness of Christ is seen, furthermore, in his relations to the Holy Spirit. This mighty power I suppose no one professes to have entirely fathomed. We know not whence it cometh, whither it goeth, nor indeed what it is. By its effects we know it exists, and ever operates, and that is all.

But Jesus Christ was thoroughly conversant with it. He not only received it from God, but imparted it to others. “ The Comforter, — whom I will send unto you from the Father.” He breathed on his disciples and said, “ Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” This divine energy dwelt in him in its fulness ; he was saturated with its essence. We may note that as his crucifixion drew near, and especially after his resurrection, the effluence of the Spirit through him became more and more copious and quickening. His humanity faded away like a vanishing bow, and was lost in his divinity. So great and overmastering

were his communications of the Spirit, that, on the wayside, in the garden, within the chamber, or on the seashore, as he drew near and spake, many hearts must have burned within themselves. There was a conscious divinity in his air and bearing which overpowered the multitude; a word, a look, would sometimes strike them with awe. It was "God," the ineffable, the Holy Spirit, "manifest in the flesh."

But I anticipate objections to the view presented in this discourse. 1. It will be said that to invest him with such exalted qualities is to make him an inconsistent being. If he was not simply a man, then he must have been God himself. To assign him any intermediate position, only introduces confusion and perplexity, and makes him we cannot tell what; makes him incongruous and self-contradictory. I answer, if he did not stand in his personality between the Father and us, he would not be a mediator; and he could not then be, as the New Testament calls him, both the Son of God and the Son of man. Christ is a mysterious, unknown being, but not therefore self-contradictory. A mystery is not an absurdity; it is either a thing unrevealed, but which can be made known,—as the word is used often by Paul,—or it is simply something above our comprehension. In this sense, nature is full of mysteries, such as gravitation, light, heat, electricity, and so forth. God is a mystery above our comprehension; and so indeed is man; we cannot penetrate the human heart, and know all that is in the thoughts of any mortal whatever.

And if mere man is a mystery, how much more the Son of God. What depths in that sacred being there must be,—which no line of ours can sound. Well did the great painter, Leonardo da Vinci, when he had placed on his canvas of the Lord's Supper all the portraits of the twelve, pause before that of the Master, nor dare to portray that express image of God.

2. But it is furthermore objected that, "by exalting Christ so highly we place him above imitation, we cannot follow his example." I answer, we are called constantly in the Scriptures to imitate God. "Be ye holy, as I am holy;" "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful." Yet who complains that such commands are impracticable? Indeed, the higher the model the more power it can give us. Perfect holiness, love, forbearance, virtue, is the very standard we need. The arrow aimed at the sun may not reach it, but will surely rise higher than if directed to the earth.

3. Yet again it is said, "Christ cannot be so far above humanity, for we are summoned to be 'one with him,' implying that he is on our level." True, he prays that we may be one with him; but does it follow that we *can* be in all respects one? He calls us to be perfect, yet perfection does not belong to humanity. Obviously, by setting himself between us and the Father, he shows that, although he stood higher in his rank, powers, and position than we do, yet we can rise toward him, as he rose toward the Infinite and Eternal One.

Instead, therefore, of depression and discourage-

ment, I find in the text, and our view of it, animation and strength. It presents Christ, not simply as dwelling in this murky vale of humanity, but so high above us that he can reach the Father, take of his Holy Spirit, and transmit it to us. It brings before us a Saviour, not exhausted by the intellect, not bounded, measured, and known, but unknown, and therefore arousing us to search, penetrate, and explore the vast inward regions of that mysterious Being, assuring us that,

“Still new beauties may we see,
And still increasing light.”

Yes, on him who is exalted so high that every knee in heaven and on earth bow at his name, we may well ponder evermore. Laying aside the weighty armor of logic and philosophy, it behooves us to approach Christ with the simple trust of little children. When once the toiling intellect gives over its labor, and the heart is poured out upon him, then he communicates himself freely, flooding the soul with light, joy, and peace from the Father. Fatigued no more by this long pilgrimage, which vainly hopes to see Christ with the natural eye, and span him with our narrow understanding, we now sit meekly down, and repose in the gracious, though it may be mysterious, light of his countenance, content with reverencing him as our Lord and Master, giving him our deep affections, and leading a life consciously and joyously hid with Christ in God.

V.

WORSHIP.

THAT THEY SHOULD NOT WORSHIP IDOLS.—Rev. ix. 20.

THE foundation of worship is laid in the depths of human nature. Religion is not, as many imagine, the work of the priesthood. It is not the creation of man; neither is its hold of the spirit local, temporary, uncertain, and fluctuating. Its forms may and do constantly change; its manifestations are various, but the thing itself is universal, stable, and permanent. No nation or tribe has been destitute of love, gratitude, admiration, and reverence. Everywhere, and in all ages, the human race has cherished those sentiments which lie at the basis of worship. Yet more; man does everywhere, and by the constitution of his nature, actually exercise the sentiments in question. He sets his heart on some object; he not only loves, but he has a supreme love; he not only respects, but he venerates; he not only honors, but pays a reverence so high that it mounts up to adoration. He has an internal feeling, born with him, which disposes and prompts him to the most intense regard and the loftiest estimate of its object. And this feeling breaks forth into action;

it pours itself out with more or less energy, and eventuates in worship. It needs no argument, I am sure, to establish the position now taken. We know from the deductions of philosophy, we know by experience, that the heart is susceptible of an interest which, whether it take the form of gratitude, trust, or joy, and to whatever it may tend, either of good or evil, of the ennobling or the degrading, increases from small beginnings, and waxes stronger and stronger until it culminates in worship.

We have not to ask, Shall we worship or not? Ought we, or ought we not, to exercise this sentiment? We do already worship; and the only remaining question is this, *What* shall we worship? What is the true object, the legitimate end, and the rightful exercise of this spirit?

There is but one rational reply to this interrogatory. The only worthy object of worship is the Creator of the Universe, its omnipotent Sustainer, the Friend and Benefactor of man. He alone deserves adoration, because he only combines in himself all that is purest, most sacred, most elevating, most tender and lovely. We were fashioned for, and incline to, the sentiment of veneration. But no being is entitled, either by his character or his works, to supreme veneration except the unspotted One, the Father of all Majesty. We are prone to bow before a perfect goodness. But where shall we find it? Who will show us any good, that is, any perfect good, below him? We may reverence the manifestations of greatness, of moral excellence, and of spiritual

elevation in mortal man. The saintly virtues of a Chrysostom, a St. Bernard, or a Fénelon, the heroic spirit of a Bayard, an Alfred, or a Washington, may excite our admiration; but no one will contend that these, or any other exhibitions of human excellence, deserve the highest regard of which our minds and hearts are capable. We can conceive certainly of a still greater excellence. Imagination can rise to heights of goodness, a majesty of holiness, and a breadth of sanctity seen in no human being. And this, and this alone, of course, can present us with the true object, — that which we may worship. The Father, and he alone, is commensurate with the deepest affections of the soul. The Father, and he only, can fill the spiritual eye, and satisfy the cravings of an inexhaustible love, and meet the aspirations and answer the pleadings of an imperishable nature.

The Bible also recognizes everywhere this same propensity. The book of Revelation warns us against the worship of idols. But it does not admonish us to take heed lest we worship nothing. Scripture, like the light of nature, assumes that we shall worship something; and that we always do. Willing or unwilling; whether we select a praiseworthy object or the reverse; nay, whether we receive, or reject, or treat with indifference the great theme of religion, we do and we must, meantime and at all times, worship one thing or another.

Looking into history, you find, it is true, constant perversions of this sentiment; but still everywhere the sentiment itself. The earliest records of our

race are the Hebrew Scriptures. But allusion is made in them to a worship existing before Judaism. In the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heathen nations had their gods. Laban had his idols; the Chaldæan and Babylonian, the Egyptian and the Phœnician, were idolaters. No reference is ever made to any people who had no gods whatever.

The Israelites were admonished against the false gods of surrounding nations. But they were never warned of the danger of no worship at all, for the simple reason that there was no such danger as that. The most degraded tribe or clan has its idols; the most enlightened, civilized, and refined nations, whether their theology be true or false, is sure to *have* a theology. I do not mean that they all know the true God. Some of our race—and those found alike among the lowest and the highest in culture—have not distinctly set up any altar, or served what they called God. But though the name was wanting, the thing, that is, the worship, in some form, was always there.

This sentiment leads man in rude ages to bow down before objects whose favor he would propitiate, or whose wrath he would avert. He worships the earthquake and the thunder-storm, that he may escape their overwhelming power. He pays this tribute to the sun and moon and stars, that they may shed kindly on him their saving and controlling influences. He adores also the seasons, or the deities who preside over them, the graceful forest, the bubbling fountain, the life-giving stream, the maternal

earth, and the vivifying air. In more advanced periods he fashions his own gods, and prostrates himself before the work of his own hands. And, finally, he worships representatives, pictures, types and images of the true God. The dead are elevated to this position. Heroes are found on the battle-field, and heroes are created by the fireside. In the sanctuary, on the throne, in the forum, — prophet, priest, king, poet, songster, — all these from age to age are idolized.

And consider, too, what man bestows on his deities. He will give of his substance for the saving of his soul; he will sacrifice human victims, offering up sometimes even his own children on his altars. Scandinavia, Tartary, Mexico, New Zealand, in ancient and in modern periods, numberless such instances in point present themselves. It matters not who, or what, is the object, the costliest gifts are poured out with lavish profusion; nothing is withheld, and nothing grudged, if it may but gratify this ineradicable propensity to worship.

And we also, in this Christian age, have one and all enrolled ourselves on the long list of worshippers. We hear, I know, of atheists; but where is the nation which believes in no God? France, in her “reign of terror,” sought to dethrone the Almighty; but the spirit of adoration was never quenched. Her temples were still kept open; a strange god was enthroned in them, but still it *was* a god. And in her late revolution, so ingrained was this sentiment, that the very mob spared and paid homage to every

sacred thing. Where is the man who does not believe in any God whatever? We are sometimes told of the irreligious, who do not worship at all. But point me to the man who does not worship some deity? The cry of all hearts is, — even where religion is least revered and obeyed, — “Make us gods which shall go before us; set up for us an idol.”

You may hear this cry on the exchange; and quickly is it answered. In these days what hearty worshippers gather round the golden calf. Throng upon throng have gone up to the altar of mammon, —

“Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell
From Heaven.”

The bank, the mine, the railway, and the telegraph, with their legion of kindred spirits, are towering and expanding above, or undermining, the worship of God; they are pressing down and menacing, O how often! the very life of the Christian. We are making idols of the work of our own hands. Lands in the West, or lands in the East, or princely edifices, splendid dwellings, mechanic inventions, conveniences and comforts for this passing world, they are all good in their places, but not good enough to be worshipped.

There is a wide-spread homage of persons. Office, and the men who fill office, civil power and place, military heroes, — for these, too, we inwardly bend the knee. Many in our political parties know and care for no gods but personal ambition and polit-

ical success ; on these two altars they sacrifice friendship, Christian courtesy, patriotism, principle, religion itself, — yes, sacrifice their very souls.

With how many is appetite an idol. What shall we eat and what shall we drink ? is their devoutest prayer. Fashion sits on her shrine and inhales the incense of millions. It can make the old assume the giddiness of youth ; it can reconcile the poor to living a life of privation and martyrdom at home for the sake of an occasional hour of display in public. The love of the world and the fear of the world usurp the sacred throne above, and become to us “the awful shadow of that Unseen Power.” When we see how the noble sentiments of loyalty and self-consecration, which would make the Christian hero and worshipper, are degraded to a homage of the breath of applause, while we mourn the perversion, we see them bear witness to the deep-seated propensity in man to adore something ; to bow down before some invisible, omnipotent tribunal ; to sacrifice what a wealth of affection to some object beyond himself.

Intellect in these days is not only respected, as it should be, but often worshipped. We estimate a man, not according to his moral worth, but his mind. The intellect, be the life never so impure, has but to write a splendid essay, and we cry, “All hail the mighty man !” or let it, Herod-like, make an oration, and the people shout, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man.”

And even within the precincts of religion itself

there is not a little idolatry. Men build a church, and so intent do they become on the work, and so proud of its adornments, that they forget the Most High, and adore his house. And not the altar alone, but he that waiteth there supplants sometimes the great Object of prayer. It is possible for the preacher to be made a deity. There was more than wit in the question once put with a taunt to another: "What minister do you worship?" Too easily does the vehicle or place of our devotions absorb that veneration which belongs only to the Infinite and Perfect One.

So prone is our race, not only in the blindness of heathenism, but under the very light of Christianity, to deify mere mortals, that we cannot marvel at the Romanism which we may see out of the Church as well as in it. How insensibly do the departed come to occupy the supreme place in the human heart. From seeking the intercession of the saints, men pass imperceptibly to the worship of the saints themselves. The picture of the noble martyr leads to martyr-worship. And the image, designed only as a medium to lift the soul to the Redeemer, becomes in the end itself the object of an ultimate love, honor, and veneration.

So do we see everywhere, as we should anticipate,

"A faint and trembling sense,
Vague, as permitted by omnipotence,
Foreshow the immortal radiance round us shed.

"Like the chained eagle in his fettered might,
Straining upon the heavens his wistful sight,

So chained to earth, and baffled, — yet so fond
Of the pure sky, which lies so far beyond,
We make the attempt to soar in many a thought
Of Heaven's love born, and into Heaven's love wrought;
Dimly we struggle upwards."

Looking at man's proclivity to the creation and service of idols, some fear lest the name and reverence of the Eternal One may some time die out of our race. But there is no ground for this apprehension. Man is born for worship, and that sentiment can never be extinguished. We may pervert it, and abuse and degrade it, but it can never be destroyed.

Atheism, or the extermination of the sentiment of worship, we are not to fear. But this we may and should fear, — the substitution of other objects in our hearts for the one true God. Consider what it is to pay him the Christian tribute. The true worshipper worships the Father, and he does it in spirit and in truth. The Father, — how sedulously ought we to guard that name! how jealous should we be of his honor! Our very idea of God is susceptible of declension; for according to our own characters the thought of him will be higher or lower. If we imbrute ourselves by devotedness to the flesh, or if we mammonize, so to speak, our inner man, or if the lusts of pride and ambition usurp the throne of God, then we lose the very power to conceive of him aright. We hide our God where we cannot find him in our need; we become earthly minded, bestial, godless.

Brethren, keep yourselves from idols. Let not

the outward enter and desecrate the inner temple, — that temple built within you expressly for the Holy Spirit. Remember you were created for worship. This you cannot escape ; you may come to church or remain at home ; you may set your affections supremely on one thing or another ; but you cannot obliterate the sentiment which leads the true heart to the Father. And why should you desire to divert it from him ? Why worship Mammon ? Why make an idol of praise and preferment, or of social elevation, or of mere party success ? Why elevate home, friend, mortal man, in any station or in any relation, to the throne of the Almighty ? Scrutinize, I beseech you, your inmost soul, go into the depths of your secret love, and cast out your idols of silver and of gold, and whatever false gods you find there that you are daily worshipping. Cast them all out, and into your swept and garnished spirit let Jesus Christ — the Mediator between us and the Father — enter and dwell. Be ready to dethrone houses and lands, to dethrone everything else, and henceforth, and, with an undivided devotion, worship God.

VI.

CHARACTER AND REPUTATION.

CORNELIUS, A JUST MAN, AND ONE THAT FEARETH GOD, AND OF
GOOD REPORT. — Acts x. 22.

THE Bible — in all respects the Book of books — is in nothing more remarkable than in the variety, distinctness, and prominence of its unnumbered biographies. Among them we have, given us by a few master strokes, the sketch of a Roman centurion named Cornelius. Many topics suggest themselves in relation to his peculiar and noteworthy traits. I have selected the theme chiefly, however, for one single point; that is, its combination of two qualities, usually confounded, but here kept distinct. In a previous clause he is called “a devout man, and one who gave much alms to the people;” and here he is said, in the first place, to be “a just man,” and “one that feared God;” and it is then added, “and of good report.” His justice, or righteousness, as the word means, his alms-giving, and his devotion to God, constitute his character. “The good report” which prevails in regard to him constitutes his reputation.

These two things, so seldom distinguished, are, we shall find, in reality, separate, and essentially unlike.

The one is interior, latent, and unseen ; the other is external, manifest, and seen. Reputation is simply what our fellow-men think of us ; character is what we really are.

It is not easy to define character ; so subtle is its nature, and so secret its growth, that, while we think to analyze and portray it, it has vanished from our grasp.

In the green hours of midsummer, we see the rich garden and the broad fields and the shining trees, enamelled with glory. But who can tell *how* all this is accomplished ? By what power does the generous earth cause the seed to germinate ? Through what divine chemistry does the sun intermingle, and lay on so gently, and with such delicacy, accuracy, and harmony these splendid tints and hues ? We know not ; neither do we know all the processes by which character grows up and grows on. The Divine spirit mingles invisibly, and inaudibly, with our own efforts, and fashions, and moulds, and crowns the great whole.

But, though the methods are often latent, the thing itself we can to some extent comprehend. Character is the grand result, not only of the shower and the sunshine from above, but of man's own incessant toil. It is the residuum of countless deposits ; the resultant of a myriad of forces ; or, rather, it is itself the central force of all true action. It is the substance of our spiritual being. It is the life of our lives ; whatever there is of reality or of depth within us, that is our character. If we are con-

scious of any motive power; if we present any effectual resistance to the great tide of circumstances; if we have ever looked steadfastly toward heaven, and resolved before God "to act well our part,"—come what might of our name and our fame,—then we possess character. To do good is much; but the element I would describe goes beyond that,—it resolves to *be* good. Forswearing all mere appearances, it determines, not to seem, but to be.

In one word, character makes one feel that this, our passing existence, is no "time-shadow;" but that, in solemn verity,

"Life is real, life is earnest."

Then we build up an edifice in ourselves, not like the muddy tenements of earth, to be blown down by the winds, or carried away by the rains; but permanent, fixed like the everlasting hills. We cherish a love, which is all-suffering, all-abstaining, all-aspiring; a principle which has vowed to itself that it will be a fool in this world's regard, sooner than soil its white hands by any of its "base compliances."

Another mark of character is, that it is symmetrical and harmonious. To preserve anything like consistency in our deportment, we must act out of the very depths of our being. What makes us so capricious, loving yesterday, hating, or lukewarm to-day; now truthful, and now paltering and deceptive? It is our lack of that spinal column, a per-

sonal, independent integrity. This makes one always reliable ; it

“ Bespeaks the man, who acteth out the whole,
The whole of all he knows of high and true.”

Nothing is more difficult than to maintain that healthy, well-proportioned state within, which constitutes the life and soul of character. It is easy to follow one's passions and whims ; it is very easy to act as we happen to feel at the moment, to be generous or selfish, resentful or forgiving, as the mood may take us. It is no task to follow the multitude, right or wrong. But hard is the task to obey everywhere and always the stern behests of duty. How like removing mountains it is to cast our selfishness to the winds, and study the happiness, the virtue, the present and future good of those who stand thickly around us. And yet, that is the very cross we must take up, or bid adieu to the high places in Christ's kingdom.

And what now, to go a step further, is the true foundation for this sacred edifice, character ? The same as that laid by Cornelius, and no other. He was “ a devout man, one that feared God ; ” he was not only a just man, and full of charity to the poor, but one who “ prayed to God always.” Why should we ever separate worship and work, morality and piety ? They are not chemical opposites ; but they have mutual affinities and attractions ; and they were intended to blend and intermix with each other. We want all the special virtues, it is true, to make the

complete Christian arch; but why leave out the key-stone? Why say, "Good morals are enough, let religion go." Jesus Christ did not let it go; the Bible does not let it go; human nature, well and truly developed, will not let it go. Character, the immediate jewel of the immortal soul, demands God, to underlie, harmonize, and uphold it.

We make singular mistakes by disregarding the distinction referred to above. We sometimes speak of "giving one a character." But what *is* character? In its broadest sense, it is the aggregate of all those qualities which make up the man. His religion or his irreligion, his benevolence or his selfishness, his purity or impurity of heart, speech, and life. Now, to talk of giving a person these and the like traits is to use words without meaning. But reputation we can give to one another. And, unhappily, we can also take it from one another:

"He that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

This distinction, so seldom recognized, is, in a Christian aspect, one of vital moment. For, according as we live for the one or the other, character or reputation, we dwell amid realities, our feet resting on a rock; or earth is to us built of stubble, and the great object kept before us is "the baseless fabric of a vision." What, for example, are we to say of the courtesies of society? What is the true value of external manners? If they spring only from a re-

gard to reputation, a desire to be popular, and praised for politeness, they are as empty as the air. But if we are civil to others from the promptings of character, that is, because we love our fellow-men, and by a kind manner would simply express that love, and so render every one happy, then our courtesy becomes a positive virtue.

We may divide, again, between the two in the province of the intellect. One may possess literary reputation, be famed for the fire of genius, for the poet's eye, that darts from earth to heaven; or the rock-built fortress of logic may be his; and still he may lack the basis of personal character. One may teach well, or preach reputably; or he may heal the sick; or frame, interpret, or execute the law well, and yet be so deficient in the massive proportions of personal character, so undevout before God, and so heartless toward man, that he may be as yet in the alphabet of the Gospel.

So, then, — we come to this moral paradox, — though the two things are usually connected, one may possess a good reputation, and yet have a bad character. The reverse also is true; one may unite a bad reputation with the very best character. Take, for example, the treasurer of some large and wealthy corporation, who, after having been relied upon unhesitatingly for years, proves at last a defaulter. What was all along better than his reputation? What more worthless, at the very time, than his character? Paul, illustrious for his deep love to the Father, his love to the Redeemer, and a devotion to

his brethren and to the great Gentile world, that spurred him on through perils and pains, even to the stake ; — Paul, one of the noblest illustrations of a Christlike character, was despised, persecuted, treated as the “ offscourings of the earth.” And the very Son of God, — so holy and exemplary, incorrupt and incorruptible, — in him character and reputation met in perpetual conflict. For even he was made of “ no repute ;” his divine virtue was crowned, indeed, but it was with thorns ; private ridicule, public jeering, the laceration of his tender sensibilities, the torture of the cross, were the cup he drank.

And now, what can we set before ourselves so worthy of pursuit, what is so truly valuable, as a fair, well-rounded, and completely Christian character ? Reputation is to be desired. A good name is better than silver or gold. And yet, as the master poet of our language affirms, “ reputation ” is a “ bubble ;” and however high our standing in society, and however secure we may think it, at a touch, the bubble may burst, and the hopes we built on it vanish. Not so with character ; be sure you stand right at the bar of conscience, and right at the Supreme tribunal on high, and no one can do you any essential and permanent harm. Your reputation may, indeed, sometimes suffer, but no one can injure your character. Sorrow may endure for a night, but there shall be joy in the morning.

It is good to acquire worldly possessions. Every one should labor for a competence, yes, accumulate wealth, if he can honestly and honorably ; and as-

surely this can be done. But, after all, such are the chances and changes of human life, that we may lose the largest fortune we can gain. Our riches may take to themselves wings, and flee away. And, when we come to the end of life's great drama, as we brought nothing into the world, so we can carry nothing out of the world. Yes, one thing we can and shall carry with us, — our character.

We desire, perhaps, power, — power over others. But what are place and honor, if they rest on nothing broader or deeper than themselves? He holds office, the highest office mortal man can reach, who governs others, not by his position, but by his moral weight. Let your whole conduct give "assurance of a man," and all power and all influence shall be yours. We shall one day see that the most private is the most public energy; and that grandeur of character acts in the dark, and succors them who never saw it. "There is a magnetism in real worth, which is all-potent and attractive." It is a force which, earlier or later, "will convert judge, jury, soldier, king;" — "and even nature seems to bow at its approach, as it blends with the courses of rivers, of winds, and of stars," as "of moral agents."

We love and prize friends; and yet, what is friendship except between persons of character? That which is called by this sacred name may be as evanescent as the morning cloud; it is often as baseless as the mirage of the desert. But where heart balances heart; where truth and loyalty are steadfast, and — whether present or absent — in the tongue is

the law of kindness, there we receive and give the dearest of all earthly treasures ; we exchange those precious tokens, forgiveness of errors, candid judgment, and honorable appreciation. Christ formed within becomes Christ acted without. In our troubles we have always a rock on which we can lean ; in our joys, drinking the fulness of each other's cup, we are conscious of enduring affinities ; and, under all circumstances,

“ We still embrace the happy lot
God has to each assigned ;
And, while we do his blessed will,
We bear our Heaven about us still.”

VII.

GOD LOVES WHEN HE CHASTENS.

AS MANY AS I LOVE, I REBUKE AND CHASTEN. — Rev. iii. 19.

No passage in the inspired volume is to most of us so truly a hard saying as this. The ordinary impression is, that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth not. Blessed, say we, are they who always prosper; for they enjoy a constant proof of the love of God. Blessed are they who possess all they can desire, everything that can please the eye and the ear, and soothe each craving sense. Happy were those who never knew a misfortune, a disappointment, trials in any form. Blessed were they who should never mourn, but joy and rejoice, at morn and at eve, and year upon year. Happy they who do not taste the cup of affliction now, nor ever will until the jubilant career of their lives shall terminate. For not only do they escape suffering, but they show that the frown of God is not on them, as it surely is on the afflicted.

But is this the true view of our relations to the Ruler of the Universe? Can he give no evidence of his good-will except by bestowing uninterrupted prosperity, — a flood-tide of happiness that shall know no ebb?

These questions are answered only by considering the great problem: What is life,—the true life of a human being? Why were we created? Why are we endowed and situated as we are? We have an animal nature that connects us with the lower orders of beings. To them,—creatures as they are that perish,—we cannot doubt what is the best gift of their Maker. Constituted as they are, he can give them no good beyond the things of earth; their capacities admit only of the pleasures of sense. To withhold from them any outward indulgence, therefore, is to show them a token of disfavor.

But man has a higher nature; there is a spirit within him, impalpable, ethereal, and immortal. Surpassing, as this does, in its perceptions and its sensibilities, our merely physical endowments, can it be that He who formed and sustains us—if he is truly our friend—will neglect this interior, immortal part of our nature? Is it credible that he will confer upon us no higher blessings than he does on the perishable brute, nothing, that is, beyond material good? The very moment we claim to have a spiritual nature we present also a claim for a spiritual treatment. If there be a soul within this mortal encasement, and if—as no one can ever soberly question—it is our highest and best portion, then our true life must be the life of the soul. And then he only prospers whose inward being is advancing from strength unto strength. He alone has a sure token of the love of God who is subjected to a discipline in accordance with his nature and his position. And

the more perfect the adaptation between our nature and our discipline, the clearer is the proof of his regard for us.

To illustrate this view by analogies: God is our Great Teacher; we count him a faithful teacher who adopts means and methods suited to the advancement of his scholars. Not he who never teaches his pupils by any arduous courses; not the man who maintains no discipline in his school, who never rebukes and never chastens, but he who does one or all of these things, as his scholars require them, he is the good teacher. Why then shall not our Heavenly Instructor exercise the same faithfulness towards us?

God is also our Father; Jesus affirmed this, and the wide universe reiterates the assurance. But he can give us no good evidence of his parental care and fidelity if he neglect the better part of our nature altogether, or if he withhold his chastisements when they are manifestly needful for our spiritual welfare. A true father does not deal with his children according to the demands of their passing ease, or of a blind indulgence. When he employs a wise, and, if need be, a severe discipline, that he may perfect their character, he is their real friend. For their moral good he will chasten them; in a genuine self-sacrifice, and with a single eye to their establishment in virtue and piety, — not in hardness of heart, — not as their enemy, but as their friend; and because he so loves them, therefore does he chasten them.

Christ is the vine of which we are the branches,

and God is the husbandman. The worthless vine or tree we neglect ; its branches we suffer to shoot forth in wild profusion ; the good tree is pruned, robbed of shoots, foliage, and sometimes even of a portion of its fruit, that what remains may be perfect. Even so does God prune our ever-living part with sorrow's sharp knife, that it may bear imperishable fruit.

Observe his dealings with the race at large. What nations has he specially favored, and how ? Whence came this vast republic ? God in the beginning sent hither a pilgrim race. By a little band, driven from their dear homes, forced to buffet the wintry seas, thrown on a bleak and barren coast, exposed to savage tribes, pressed with famine, smitten by disease, and with deaths oft, — thus was laid the cornerstone of this mighty nation. And now, I ask, was not the love of the Father, even beneath this apparent frown, beaming brightly toward these coming days ?

And when afterward the American Colonies waxed strong, and thoughts of liberty and aspirations for a national independence sprung up in their bosoms, how were they led on to their fruition ? For eight long years the hand of chastening was upon them. Oppressed by an all-potent monarch, called to encounter a disciplined soldiery, yet destitute themselves of arms and supplies, torn from the plough and the workshop, their wives and little ones left famishing at home, compelled to take up arms against their mother land, and, by an awful necessity, their hands dipped in their brothers' blood, and with

scattered forces, and these few in number ; now fainting beneath midsummer heat, and now in tattered garments tracking with blood the winter's ice and snow, — their cause seeming often utterly hopeless and desperate ; — yet God was in it all ; and out of their straits and sorrows and pangs, he led them on ; and, through a man raised up by his special providence, and instinct with self-sacrifice, he at last brought forth an established and free government, a world-confessed good.

So it is always ; his chosen ones are trained in the great school of adversity. Look at the walks of science and literature. Galileo was imprisoned by the Inquisition for contending that the earth moved ; Locke was banished from his place for his liberal and bold theory of government ; not a few of the noblest orators passed through the high seminary of personal suffering. “I,” said one now living, whose life is as eloquent as his lips, “I am the embodiment of misfortune.” Those whom God would employ as the great mental luminaries of the race, he usually prepares by his sternest discipline.

Of poets, who more illustrious than the impoverished Milton, and the exiled Dante ? Who have sung, in the tenderer strains of immortal verse, like the heart-touched Schiller, the sorrowing Tasso, the plaintive Hemans ? Turn to the sacred writers, and, — passing over their peculiar inspiration, and looking at them only as oracles of an hallowed imagination, — where are the competitors of David, Job, Isaiah, and how many others, their compeers,

all led through the valley of humiliation to the Lebanon of a recorded grace?

We speak of our holy religion as a message of Divine goodness; but what was its origin? and what is its purport? Did it come to us clad in soft raiment, and offering us a downy pillow? Nay, it addresses man as a sinner, alienated from his God and Father, and to be reconciled through Jesus Christ; and that only by the pains of a broken and contrite heart, and the pangs of the new birth.

On whom do the benedictions of our Saviour chiefly rest? "Blessed," said he, "are the poor;" "Blessed are they that mourn and weep." "When men shall revile you and persecute you for my sake, rejoice and be exceeding glad." So clear is it, as one well says, that, "though prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament, adversity is the blessing of the New." The Jew regarded temporal losses as tokens of the displeasure of God; and not a few Christians commit the same unhappy error. Those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, they think must have been sinners above all others. Not so saith the Redeemer. All must repent, he tells us, or by a worse than outward calamity, they will alike perish.

Not that we are forbidden by Christ to desire, and seek with moderation, the good things of earth; but, that we may not, Dives-like, regard them as our best portion. Seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, we may add, if God please, these outward things. But trials in some form we all need; for uninterrupted success not seldom engen-

ders pride, worldliness, and sin ; we need chastening to take away the heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh.

And if piety for its inception and perfection demands trials, so does Christian love. None feel for the sick like those who have themselves been cast on the bed of languishment and pain. The mourner receives the truest sympathy from sorrow-tried hearts. It is a precious privilege to help the needy and speak peace to the troubled ; but those whom God would qualify for this blessed ministry he usually educates by personal reverses, by private griefs, and a bitterness which the heart keepeth in its secret places.

None are so truly grateful to God — strange as this may seem to the unsanctified — as those who have passed through the deep waters of affliction. The over-indulged child is never of a thankful spirit. His parents, how often obey him, and not he them ; they come at last to tremble at his beck ; and the whole household are his menials ; the more he receives, the more does he demand. Never content, how can he be grateful ? Never satisfied, whom should he thank ? Even so in the dealings of our Divine Father ; they who have no changes, fear not God. Sufficient unto themselves, why should they look above ? We need the exercise of the supreme authority to make us feel our dependence. When trouble comes upon us, then we grow thoughtful ; then the wisdom of the Father, and then at length, his love, become manifest. In the bright sunshine of a lengthened prosperity we are sometimes dazzled, and become spirit-

ually blind. A cloud comes over us ; and the shade cools, and the rain-drops refresh our parched affections. If God chastens us in his sovereignty, he doth it also in love :

“ For as his majesty is,
So also is his mercy.”

But some may still doubt. “ How can it be, that if God has a father’s regard for me,” such an one will ask, “ he should disappoint, afflict, and chasten me ? Nay, may I but prosper in my worldly schemes, — enjoy health, plenty, friends, honors, and uninterrupted happiness, — let God only grant me freedom from suffering in every form, then I will believe that he does really love me.”

But what follows ? That friends are to be desired above grace, and that gold is better than goodness, that Lazarus was the fool, and Dives the wise man. I knew one who took this as the ground-plan of his life. “ I had rather be a rich man,” — he once used these very words, — “ I had rather be a rich man and go to hell, than a poor man and go to heaven.” With such a person we can, of course, have no discussion ; for he distinctly casts away the jewel of the soul. For sordid pelf he flouts man’s immortal hopes. Few such, we charitably trust, can be found under Gospel beams. Most men would say, “ I do value a pure heart, a Christian character, and the promise of Heaven ; but why can I not gain these, and everything on earth beside ? ” The old prayer, “ Give me God, and Mammon too.” But so it cannot

be; we must choose the one and subordinate — not utterly sacrifice, but subordinate — the other. If we choose God, if we would be holy here and happy hereafter, then we must accept the leadings of our Father above, and never doubt that, through darkness as in the light, under chastisement, no less than amid bounty, He still loves us.

It is not until this view of human life becomes with us a settled conviction, that we are truly converted to God. Look habitually below, and you will see in life's strange orderings only confusion, perplexity, and evil. Look steadily above, and usually, if not always, in the very midnight of your trials, you will see the stars of mercy come forth, and sometimes, as you watch and wait, the bright sun of God's love will rise, and shine upon, and irradiate your path.

But, to enjoy these alleviations we may not defer all thought of them to times of trial and bitterness. Jesus prepared his disciples for their coming trouble. "Now I tell you," said he, "before it is come to pass, that when it is come to pass ye may believe." A pious friend once told me, that in an agony of sudden bereavement she cried with her Saviour on the cross, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" But in a moment she added, "The will of the Lord be done." What grace was then given to that spirit, — given as a recompense for her long spiritual preparedness.

I speak of delay; but who has not already tasted in some form the cup of adversity? Who has not

been called to disappointments and revulsions and losses, which ought long since to have raised his heart to the over-presiding Spirit? "Happy for us," as another well says, "if, having walked on winter snows, we are so inured by the discipline, that we can tread joyously on the spring grass and the young flowers of the future." For then we shall no more dread outward evil as the bane of our existence, and as a proof that God hath forsaken us. No, then only shall we fear that we are forgotten by him when he ceases to deal with us as immortal beings. Said a man in my hearing, "I have not shed a tear these fifteen years." That man lacked evidence, if any one can, that he was loved by God. Let us tremble when for long years our hearts are touched by no providence; when bereavement has not entered our domestic circle, no sharp sickness visited ourselves nor our dwelling, and misfortune has become to us an unknown thing. For then it may indeed be true that God has withdrawn the truest tokens of his love, that he hath taken his Holy Spirit from us.

The happy throng of the redeemed, when on earth, "through fiery trials trod." They who have reached the highest seats in the spirit-world are "the noble army of martyrs." "No cross, no crown," who can doubt that this is the refrain of the angel choir? They have risen to that clear atmosphere in which the great truth flames on the eye, that suffering is not sent in wrath, but in love. They sit fast by the throne of the Lamb,—the Lamb of God;—and who is he? What was his condition when clad in

the flesh? "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So spake that voice from heaven which came once with the Spirit-dove to the baptismal waters of Jordan. The beloved he was, the best loved of the Father, — and how did God testify that love for him? The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings. Why then do we, in the hour of trial and trouble, harbor fears, misgivings, and doubts? The cup of which our Redeemer once drank, why should we refuse it? With thanks rather for that bleeding sacrifice, may we give our brow to his holy baptism, and so bear the cross laid on us by a Father's hand, that we may at last receive that crown which fadeth not away.

VIII.

WORK FOR THE NEEDY, WORK FOR CHRIST.

INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST
OF THESE MY BRETHREN, YE HAVE DONE IT UNTO ME.—
Matt. xxv. 40.

THE scene, of which these words form a part, is usually referred to as an illustration of the principle by which we shall be judged at the day of retribution. It is cited to show the absolute necessity of acts of beneficence and charity; and as furnishing the rule, or standard, by which we can test our claim to the character and the hopes of the Christian. And this use of it is highly important; for it proves the fundamental position, that we are to receive, by the law of Christianity, not according to our belief alone, or our feelings alone, but primarily, and supremely “according to the deeds we have done in the body.”

But I now quote the passage for another purpose; it is to exhibit one of the methods in which we can best serve and honor our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

The Christian world has been anxious, in all ages, but never too anxious, to render homage and service

to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have earnestly desired to exalt his name above every name among men; they have sought nothing more steadily than to win his personal approbation, and secure to themselves his present and his everlasting favor.

It is remarkable in how many ways, and by what various instrumentalities and means, the several portions of Christendom have labored to honor Christ. The Catholic has made images of him, statues in bronze, marble, silver, and gold; he has sought by employing paintings, bas-reliefs, engravings, and indeed by every form of art and beauty, to represent the likeness of Christ. Cathedrals have been erected in his name; and they have been embellished by every outward object that genius could invent, or human skill could execute. In foreign lands, scenes and objects have been multiplied for this purpose, the mere contemplation of which renders one weary of their multitude and their splendor. And these objects have been worshipped in every posture, and through all forms of bodily pain and penance; and this worship has been bestowed cheerfully, in the hope of propitiating the Redeemer.

The Protestant, offended by these demonstrations of external homage to Christ, engaged in a great and world-renowned reformation, the leading purpose of which was to substitute for adoration to his image the worship, of Christ himself, directly and personally. It has been thought that while the former, image-worship, was displeasing in his sight, the latter could not fail to be acceptable; that in no way can

we be so sure to honor Christ, as by bending the knee to him in prayer, and calling him "Lord, Lord."

So is it that Catholic and Protestant alike have contended that the honor due to Christ, was wholly of a personal nature; that the only method by which we can serve him is to exalt his name with our lips, or to raise him to the utmost height imagination can reach. To strive earnestly for his outward elevation, is considered the main evidence of a Christian, and the chief duty we owe to him.

But let us turn now from his Church, and inquire how Christ himself desires to be served? In what manner does he call us, primarily, to honor his name? By what acts is he best pleased? Through what means and methods has he taught us to "glorify the Son"?

I recollect no passage in which he requires his followers to bow down before his image; none, either, in which he demands worship, as the "God of gods;" nor yet one where he exacts personal homage, in any degree, as the saving act, the very test of the Christian. During all his ministry he refused to accept the incense of prayer, and directed his disciples to "worship the Father." Once only did he place himself before the multitude to receive their public demonstrations. And then—which was when he entered Jerusalem in triumph—he did it, not chiefly for personal aggrandizement, but, as is evident, to illustrate two great principles of his religion. He rode on a despised animal, one employed as an

emblem of peace, and not on that animal which was used in war, — showing thus that he was the Prince of Peace. He appeared also, not in the character of a proud monarch, but, by his lowly equipage, illustrated that humility, which, like peace, is a vital part of his religion. It was homage to these two virtues, and not to himself alone, he would, then and there, call forth. And, beautifully did this occasion accord with his whole life. Instead of setting himself up as an idol for the people, or as one to be attended upon by his disciples, he made himself literally “the servant of all;” bestowing care, labor, and constant attentions upon others. Everywhere, it was manifest that “the Saviour of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

The character of Christ was marked, and rendered pre-eminent, by this peculiarity. Instead of receiving acts of service from others, such as kings and lords were wont to receive, he went about serving them. His disciples did not wash his feet, as was customary for the servant to do for his master, but he washed theirs. He wandered from city to city, hungry and thirsty; and often did no man satisfy his wants; yet he wrought a miracle that he might feed thousands of others. When the multitude would take him by force, and make him their king, he refused this personal honor. But how earnestly did he labor to elevate, — in every true and noble sense, — to elevate all others. He pointed his followers to that honor which cometh from on high; and he promised that whosoever would keep his command-

ments, him the Father would honor and love ; and Christ would love him ; and to the obedient, practical, and self-denying disciple they would both come and make their abode with him.

Now, what we prize and practise ourselves, that we always desire to see in our friends ; and we regard ourselves as honored when our principles are adopted and our best actions are imitated. What is it to truly honor any good man ? Not certainly to lavish praise on his deeds, while our own are at variance with them. Who is he that truly exalts the name of Washington ? Can this be done by pouring upon him high-sounding epithets alone ? Would that illustrious patriot have felt flattered by the annual incense of the public orator, while his principles were disregarded, and the virtues he recommended and exhibited were set at naught among the people ? Nay, what did he inculcate in his farewell address to this nation ? He called on the people to deny themselves, their unholy passions and selfish interests and narrow views, and live for their country. And he who does this pays honor to the father of his country ; while all the mere language of respect, and all high imaginations of his greatness, and all claims set up because we are the descendants of such an ancestor, or because we exalt, in any manner, his mere name, — all these things are a vain tribute. It is only when we live like Washington that we proclaim and perpetuate his merits, and can imagine his pure spirit to smile upon us from the heavens. So is it with our exalted Redeemer.

"O Thou, who once on earth, beneath the weight
 Of our mortality didst live and move,
 The incarnation of profoundest love ;
 Who on the cross that love didst consummate,
 Whose deep and ample fulness could embrace
 The poorest, meanest of our fallen race ;
 How shall we e'er that boundless debt repay ?
 By long, loud prayers in gorgeous temples said ?
 By rich oblations on thine altar laid ?
 Ah no ! not thus thou didst appoint the way :
 When thou wast bowed our human woe beneath,
 Then, as a legacy, thou didst bequeath
 Earth's sorrowing children to our ministry ;
 And as we do to them, we do to thee."

Yes, if we would truly honor Jesus Christ, we must not rest content with offerings to his name and his person. Easy, in comparison, is the task to do this toward one who has so long and so almost universally received acclamations of this kind from his followers. When we speak highly of the Saviour, we do but echo the voice of the multitude. We need take up no cross and make no sacrifice to be Christians, if this be all our duty. When he calls us to "follow" him, every one can do it at once and to perfection, if nothing more be required than to sound aloud his praise. Let this be the standard, and you open the gates of Heaven to those whose lives may be diametrically opposed to the professions of their lips. Then might they, who have persecuted and slain the good men of their own times, be saved by the plea that they builded the tombs of the prophets and garnished the sepulchres of the righteous. But so it shall not be ; if we would honor Christ, we must

walk in his steps; we must do the very work which he did; we must take into our hearts and carry out in our lives the one great sentiment which animated, inspired, and sustained him from the cradle to the cross.

And now what was that sentiment?

It was sympathy with humanity; it was the love of our race; and especially was it an ever-growing interest in the poor, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the degraded. Others, many, had befriended those of their own country and their own faith; multitudes had served the renowned and fawned upon the opulent; but Jesus Christ entered a far broader path; he gave man "a new commandment," and he introduced a new spirit upon earth. He added to a distinguished piety a love of his country and a fidelity to the best principles of his nation's faith,—an enlarged affection for man, a boundless love for all nations and ages and classes. Those who had been hitherto despised he took up, protected, and saved. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me," said he, "because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." So was it that he bound to his heart the needy, the unfortunate, and all who suffer from "man's inhumanity to man." He espoused their cause, labored for their good, treated them as his born brothers, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.

It was most natural, therefore, that he should bless

those who walked in his steps, and did good to those to whom he had done good ; and that he should accept any service rendered unto these classes as a personal favor to himself. All those who are an hungered or athirst, strangers, naked, sick, or in bonds, stand as it were in his stead ; he calls them his brethren ; and “ inasmuch,” says he, “ as ye have ministered unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” To do good to any member of his family is to do good to him. He does not ask that all attention should be paid to himself ; he does not claim every honor, nor every service, for his personal benefit. No, with a glorious disinterestedness he merges his own honor, interest, and happiness in that of his brethren. “ If any man will be my disciple,” — such is his spirit, — “ let him do good to these : honor them, and you honor me ; serve my brethren, and you serve and please me.”

Do any imagine that this language tends to lower the Saviour ? I would say to such, it is the very way in which we are taught to honor God himself. “ Herein is my Father glorified,” says Jesus, “ that ye bear much fruit.” God is then glorified, that is, honored, exalted, by our bearing fruit, or doing good in this world. He is not a selfish being, cut off from his creatures and lifted up for their worship alone. No, he is exalted to have mercy upon man ; and if we would glorify him to the utmost, we also must have mercy upon man ; we must do him all the good in our power ; in other words, bear much fruit. Our very prayers, indeed, must produce this effect. If

they do not, then they bring no blessing on our head, but become "an abomination unto God."

To honor the Father and to honor the Son, then, is one and the same thing. He that does not honor Christ, by doing what he would do were he now on earth, that is, by daily benevolence, and constant kindness to all he can help, that man shows no true honor to his Saviour, and none to his God. While, on the other hand, he who goes about doing good, seeking out the poor, lifting up the fallen, and helping him to reform, healing the broken-hearted, counselling the troubled, cheering the sick, and consoling the afflicted, — yes, he who gives another but a cup of cold water, in the name of Christ, that man honors his Master, and that Master will at last honor and reward him.

The love of Christ leads us not only to perform acts of beneficence, but to do them from the right motive. We must help the poor and the perishing, as disciples of Christ, in his name and for his sake. All true Christian benevolence has reference to the principles, the life, and the precepts of Christ. As we are commanded to do all things to the glory of God, so must we seek in everything the glory of Christ. We are told that during a famine in Paris in 1680, Madame Guyon, a lady of great wealth as well as goodness, dealt out bread to the hungry with her own hands, and found employment for the poor. She was at that time persecuted for her faith, and driven at last to a hovel, where she had but a single good room, and that she gave up to her daughter

and her maid, and went herself up, by a ladder, to an unfurnished chamber. Of that place she says, "Never did I enjoy a greater content than in this hovel. It seemed to me conformable to the humbleness and simplicity which characterize the true life in Christ." Truly it was so; there was a moral grandeur thrown round that cottage, filled as it was with the temper of the lowly, self-denying Jesus, which no occupant of a palace could rival, though he gave away thousands to draw admiration and win a selfish applause.

If what I have said be true, then we are called, while we honor Christ personally, to seek, as our title-deed to his favor, his love of the brethren. Wherever we can assist one another, in whatever form we can be useful, then and there we have an opportunity to serve our Divine Master. The least act done for the least of his brethren he sets down in his account with us. Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick in your own neighborhood, perform the most private act of personal kindness, and you are serving Jesus Christ; and the more individuals you love, and the larger is the circle you help, the higher do you exalt him. Not only bless your family, your town, your country, but open your heart, and take in "the stranger." Never see a man suffer, without, as far as possible, affording him relief. Never read of injustice and cruelty, without feeling an interest in the case, and doing something, — if it be possible, the least thing, — something to set it right. A word fitly spoken, a prayer offered up to God, a hand held out toward the needy, — who can

tell how much even these might accomplish for the rescue of struggling humanity, and, through that, for the honor of Christ.

Our age is marked by its expansive benevolence. Amid the sins of our times, and the dark cloud that hangs over portions of our prospect, let us rejoice, that in one aspect it is a day of progress. Philanthropy is on the increase; the poor, the ignorant, and the erring find every day new benefactors. Let us help on, personally and individually, let us help on, this truly Christian enterprise. Let us come to the light, and seek the pure truth in relation to all questions that touch the good of our brother; and let the truth lead us to our duty. Christ is saying to us, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." Act, then, act up to your broadest convictions. Let your thoughts sink into your affections; and let your affections radiate from your heart, as from a central fire, and flame out in your conduct, so that all around you shall be enlightened, warmed, and quickened into action by your spirit and example. Honor Christ with your lips; honor him still more by your deeds; scatter plentifully around you the seeds of Christian love; let your footsteps lead higher and higher, your heart become larger and larger, and your life be covered over with deeds of mercy, done as to Christ, done for his brethren; and his smile shall then rest on your whole course; and his voice shall at last greet you to "the harvest-home": —

" Those deeds shall thy memorial be;
Fear not, — thou didst them unto me."

IX.

THE BEAUTY OF GOD.

AND THE LORD THEIR GOD SHALL SAVE THEM, IN THAT DAY,
AS THE FLOCK OF HIS PEOPLE; FOR HOW GREAT
IS HIS GOODNESS, AND HOW GREAT IS HIS BEAUTY!—
Zechariah ix. 16, 17.

THE beauty of God;—it is not a little remarkable how frequent are the allusions to this topic in the Scriptures. They speak of “the beauty of the Lord,” and call upon us to worship him in “the beauty of holiness.” The Psalmist desires earnestly to “dwell in the house of the Lord all his days, that he may behold the beauty of the Lord.” To the Jew the church stood adorned with grace: he did not view the temple of God as a mere pile of earthly materials, raised for convenience and utility. Its splendid walls had a language to his soul; he “favored” the stones of the sacred edifice, and the very dust of Jerusalem glittered, to his eye, with the beauty of God.

But this treasure was not confined to the Jewish temple. The whole material universe is replete with its manifestations. The world might have been created only for strict utility. But so it was not; the

heavens and the earth show a purpose of God to clothe them in beauty. His Divine Son, when on earth, filled with the care of souls and oppressed by daily toils, noticed the flower by the wayside, and so unprofitable a thing, as some would say, as the lily of the field. He manifested his keen sense of its beauty by saying, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like a single "one" of these splendid productions.

We find our nature such that we are gratified by this divine exhibition. God made the eye capable of discerning it, and the soul capable of feeling it. He has so fashioned the material universe as in this respect to gratify the eye and the soul. And he does this, not sparingly, not as an occasional thing, but constantly; not either as a luxury for a favored few, but as a gift to all.

His beauty is seen, first, in the subjection to law, and in the order and harmony everywhere spread around us. He has placed the animal creation under the law of instinct. Every bird that flies shows the wisdom of God; watching against the approach of danger; building its nest as he hath taught it; winging its way, now to the north and now to the south, as the coming of summer or of winter admonishes it.

And every illustration of this wisdom is accompanied by grace. Observe the beauty which God has given to the laws of motion. Not only do suns and systems move with undeviating precision, but in curves of grace. And every moving thing is guided

on by the same great law. The clouds,—what a perpetual display of gracefulness do they furnish in their ceaseless variations! Now they descend almost to our feet in a transparent thinness, and now they soar in dense masses far up as the eye can follow them. Here they move slow and solemn, like some vast funeral procession; there they rush forward as if on a breathless errand. Yesterday they whirled along the horizon, a succession of moving mountains. To-day they range themselves majestically, side by side, a band of giant forms.

Have you not marked them in the coming on of the thunder-storm? The dark speck, no bigger than a man's hand, rises and expands and towers, until it clothes a whole region in the blackness of darkness. On and on it moves, terrible as an army with banners, the peal and the flash of its ponderous artillery announcing from stage to stage its approach. The winds,—filling the air with dust-clouds, and tossing the tree-branches, and bowing the grass and the corn,—are its allies. The mist-like column is seen marching over the plains; and now a few drops fall, and anon the windows of heaven are opened. The voice of the Lord is heard amid the mighty waters, and his beauty, sublime, awful, flashes around and hushes the very breath.

The beauty of God is illustrated in all the manifold ongoings of external nature. Whether her motions be in direct lines, or however they vary, they are replete with grace. The soaring bird, the humming insect, the lowly reptile, the brute quadruped,

all exhibit, as a prevailing principle, this same quality. With what dignity the sun travels on his daily route! With what a queenly step the moon walks through her midnight path! And every planet makes a divine progress in its prescribed round. And the mystic comet, with its ethereal trail, never, in its fearful speed, violates the holy order of its God and Guide. The tree waves its boughs with gracefulness, and the river bends over the precipice with a curve which no art can surpass.

God sets his beauty before us in the endless forms of nature. He makes the curved valley and the level plain, the swelling hill and the rounded or conic mountain-top, bear witness to this attribute. It is seen in the elevations of the low country, undulating, swell beyond swell, and in the Alpine range, laid, peak above peak, against the skies. It is seen in the bending down of the heavens, and the stretching out of the earth, as they greet each other at the horizon; or as, unmarked by any separating lines, they blend in an undefinable union. And who can write out the ever-changing forms of the clouds? How nature seems to sport herself in their production! Now they curl in a woolly fineness, or like the locks of a fair-headed youth; and now they lie in beds of sundered and well-defined masses. Here you may see them swelling out, each with its darkly defined border. There is the twin-cloud, with its seams and coalescences, its festoons, and its loopings. In this quarter we see the cumulative form, cloud heaped upon cloud, and in that the lanceolate, lines and

threads and bars huge or spear-shaped, pointed or abrupt. But whether regular or irregular, or well or ill-defined, how magnificent are their formations! What architecture has the Divine hand displayed in the rearing of these mighty piles! What joinery, what carving, what sculpture! Who can contemplate their unlimited diversities and graces, and not trace the Divine accomplishment that moulds them?

From forms we pass naturally to colors. And here the Author of nature lays his highest claim to our admiration of his beauty. What a glory in the deep blue heavens, and in all their uncounted aspects, whether sombre or brilliant! The green earth, how rich and how grateful to the eye! The fair flowers, who is to portray worthily their fairness? Can you pass idly by the hues laid on these delicate creations? Can you tread one beneath your feet and ask, "Where is the proof of any high presence here?" Go into your garden, go over the wild fields of nature, and shut your eyes if you can on her myriad embellishments. There are those — sad truth! — who can see no beauty in the very fairest of God's works. Alas, for the stolid gazer! —

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose is to him,
And it is nothing more."

But if the earth does not touch man, let him look on the waters; see them as they are plated by the bright sun at high noon, how they glisten at his touch. How gracious is the meeting, at the close of

the day, between this molten sheet and the expiring rays of the softening sunlight. And from the gold of the midday sun, turn to the silver of the moonlit waves. How lovingly they reflect her smile. Stand behind the trees, and mark how, as you look through them, she seems to dance over, and exult amid the waters? When the summer shower is over, observe the Divine Builder as he erects the rainbow. One foot, perhaps, of the broad arch he plants on the solid land, the other he lets down gracefully on the ocean. Trace its companion, emulous of its rivalship; and forget not the glorious attendant in the waters. And now, describe, if you can, those matchless tints. Let the Raphaels, the Titians, and the Allstons gather round, and surpass, nay, equal this divine coloring.

Would you see yet more of the beauty of 'God, lift up your eyes again to the clouds. The attempt is vain to depict the almost infinite diversity of their hues. The condition of the atmosphere is constantly varying, and with it vary the lights and shades of these multiplex attendants. Through fog and mist, on to the densest cloud, we have a series of complexions, from the lightest gray to the deepest black. How, as like living creatures, they run, fly, swim, creep, roll, and rush, — they not only display their Protean forms, but their chameleon colors. Trace the rich embroidery, and the gorgeous tapestry. Watch them, as they unfold, scene after scene, through a single day. With what pomp they usher in the rising sun. In what splendid livery they stand

on his right hand and his left. What a life-guard for that proud monarch! How grateful in the noon-tide heat is their richly painted screen. But when evening draws nigh, then the Almighty Artist — we say it with reverence — dips his pencil in his divinest colors.

God never shows himself in such outward glory as at the hour of a brilliant sunset. From north to south he summons all his minister-clouds, to wait round the dying day. Or rather, let us say, they come, a celestial train, to introduce the glorious visitant who has blest *our* hemisphere, to another, and a not less favored one beyond. How shall we speak of their rich apparel? What are the robes of bishop or cardinal or the Papal sovereign, stiff with brocade, compared to theirs? Follow, if you can, the grand procession, and note down its heavenly regalia. Record each successive tint, — the ruby red, the flaming scarlet, the clear orange, the transparent amber, the rich sapphire, the glowing crimson. Keep pace with the rapid transition, from a dazzling brightness, down through softer hues, — the slate and the ash, to the termination in darkness. See, meantime, how the Tyrian purple of the skies is reflected in the Italian dyes of the water. Observe the lingering sun, as he bestows his last, sweetest smile on the neighboring hill-top and the church-spire, a thing only more divine than himself. How kindly his parting with the distant isle, and the uplifted rock. Truly, he is giving precious gifts, jewels and gold, to the friends he leaves behind him.

And when his orb has sunk, and its clear rim is lost below the horizon, he sends back still, through his old companion clouds, from the near west to the remotest east, long, fair rays, love-tokens from his unseen, but still benignant, countenance.

But, poor are these and all attempts to set forth fully the beauty of God. It is impressed on the sea, and on the land ; it is laid on the fields, and on the hill-sides. It is seen on the river, starting from mountain-springs, stealing down at first in modest rivulets, spreading out into streams, and rolling at last, with kingly power and grace, as it bears its tribute to the seas. And what a fair thing (we cannot omit this) is the ocean ; its calm, how lovely, with placid cheek and with a mother's smile ; its shores reflecting, with daguerrotype fidelity, each near object. Its agitations, how majestic ! its storm-frown, how terrible ! And verily the voice of the Lord is on the waters, amid the roar of winds and waves, how sublime ! The tides, in their flowing march, in their ebb of retreat, with what graceful steps they now approach the sand-paved shore, and now retire. There, too, are the islands ; God has set them as gems on the bosom of the sea. Each receding point of bay or cove is a little arm around which he binds rich bracelets. Happy is man when he can add some new feature to this workmanship of heaven. It is meet that he sets up his Pharos on the sea-rock, and aid the poor seaman by these lesser lights, when the Father has withdrawn his greater. And let the nations launch their navies, and let the humble

coaster, and the little sail-boat, and the smallest craft of the oarsman, all unite in adorning the deep, and praising Him who laid its foundations.

We may not close this imperfect enumeration of the Divine embellishments above and around us, without adverting to the loveliness of the revolving seasons. Beautiful is spring, with its swelling buds, and opening leaflets, and glow of promise; fair is summer, with its myriad blossoms and its leafy treasures; and so too is autumn, bright in fruits, and glorious in the hues with which it touches forest, field, and sky. And beautiful is winter; who can say otherwise, as he looks on the sculpture of the unclad trees, and the beauteous colors of the brilliant hoar-frost, the prismatic tints of each particle of ice, and the ermine robe now laid on the earth, and the burnished and sparkling front of the midnight, December sky?

But enough; it is perhaps more than time to ask, Why this profusion of beauty, amid which we live? To what end has God so garnished the material universe? Has he done it with no purpose whatever? This we cannot say; for the Creator does nothing in vain. He has not made a pebble, nor a grass blade, nor a mote, without some object. Beauty evidently is a work, studiously planned, and minutely perfected; and why hath he done, and why is he daily doing, this mighty work? If it is worth his care to produce it, it is certainly worth our while to seek out his motive. There is but one solution of this problem. Beauty was not intended

for the gratification of its Author ; for he does not need it to enhance his happiness. It was not intended either to please the inferior animals ; for they evidently do not, and cannot, appreciate it. It must then have been designed for man.

To reach the ultimate purpose of these adornments we must ask why, primarily, was man created ? His nature gives the answer to this question. We were made evidently for a spiritual purpose. As an animal, man is inferior in some points to the brute creation. But as an intellectual and moral being, he is infinitely their superior. And this is his great characteristic. Whatever, therefore, is done for him by his Maker, must have an ultimate reference to his moral nature.

It follows, then, that the beauty of God was intended to act upon, and improve, our higher powers and faculties. And here we reach the great conclusion of the text : “The Lord their God shall save his people ; for how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty !” One instrument of their salvation is goodness, another is beauty. This being so, goodness and beauty are one, — one in their origin, one in much of their essential character, and one in their final purpose. The outward universe is a part of the grand system of means and agencies, as it is illustrated by revelation, through which God would accomplish — we co-operating — our entire and ultimate salvation. He intends to elevate the intellect, to purify the taste, to sanctify the imagination, to make us kind and true to our brother, and to recon-

cile us to himself, in part, through this ministry of Nature. We learn this from his divine Son. This, I cannot but believe, was the light in which our Lord and Saviour pointed to the lily, to the grass of the field, to the rising and the mid-day sun, — to how many objects in nature, — to illustrate and enforce his teachings. The outer was to him a mirror of the inner world. He had an eye for all beauty; to him the fair waters of Tiberias, the calm-rolling Jordan, the serene heights of the Mount of Olives, — bearing witness, through the long midnight watches, to his prayers and struggles and tears, — must have been inexpressibly dear. For they all drew him to the Father; and they bound him also in a love, deep and pure like themselves, to the race whom he lived and died to redeem.

The true purpose of Nature, then, is to lift our souls to God, to enlarge our love of man, and to purify our hearts. It is her office to lead us on from the contemplation of *her* beauty to the beauty of holiness. Alas for us, if we never enter this blessed walk! Pitiably is his condition to whom the fair page of creation is but a blank. Sad is his mental defect who can perceive no comeliness in the face of the glorious universe. How bare and bald is his life, who has no sense of the inexhaustible beauties of this outward world, but can travel from Dan even to Beersheba and only exclaim, "It is all barrenness." Such a man loses not only one of the richest sources of happiness, but one of the most powerful incentives to purity and to piety.

For the sake of our moral good, if for no other reason, let us cherish a sincere love of nature. Whatever we see, or hear, or feel, let it be

“but a stream
That flows into a kindred stream ; a gale
Confederate with the current of the soul,
To speed our voyage to God, to pureness, and to love.”

All earth will then be to us a temple ; and all life, wherever we go, wherever we dwell, will furnish scenes full of the glad testimony : —

“Ye have left
Your beauty with me, a serene accord
Of forms and colors, passive, yet endowed,
In their submissiveness, with power as sweet
And gracious, almost might I dare to say,
As virtue is, or goodness ; sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
When God, the Giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously, in silent blessedness.”

The human mind has always had its visions of a paradise for the blest. But what will prepare one for that sacred region ? What is the Christian's paradise ? It must be a realm reserved for those who are pure in heart, and who were made pure by a communion with Jesus Christ, and by dwelling upon, and drinking in, as he did, the beauty of God, as it radiates from this world. Not a few, as they were on the brink of the eternal state, have desired to take a last look of the face of nature. O that we were so filled with her holy temper, that we could

leave behind us the touching record given of a sainted spirit, who departed a few years since in the midst of our New England mountain scenery ! It was the Sabbath ; and “ as the day declined,” says the narrator, “ his countenance fell, and he grew fainter and fainter. With our aid he turned himself towards the window which looked over valleys and woody summits to the east. We drew back the curtains, and the reflected light fell upon his face. ‘ The sun had just set, and the clouds and sky were bright with gold and crimson. He breathed more and more gently, and, without a struggle or a sigh the body fell asleep.

“ Amidst the glory of autumn, at an hour hallowed by his devout associations, on the day consecrated to the memory of the risen Christ, and looking eastward, as if in the setting sun’s reflected light he saw promises of a brighter morning, he was taken home.”

X.

SECRET PRAYER.

IF YE THEN, BEING EVIL, KNOW HOW TO GIVE GOOD GIFTS TO
YOUR CHILDREN, HOW MUCH MORE SHALL YOUR FATHER WHICH
IS IN HEAVEN GIVE GOOD THINGS TO THEM THAT ASK HIM.—
Matt. vii. 11.

WORDS cannot teach more explicitly than these, that if God is a Father, then will he give good things to those that ask him; in other words, he will, in one way or another, answer all true prayer. What is prayer? In its fullest definition it embraces these three things. 1. A sense of want. This feeling may extend only to outward things,—to gain, power, fame, or sensuous pleasures. It may reach to inward attainments, to truth, virtue, faith, and piety. But it is still only a sense of want. 2. The next element of true prayer is the seeking a supply of our want. The radical meaning of the word, indeed, is request, petition, entreaty. And this embraces, furthermore, the idea of a Power, to which the prayer is offered, competent to grant its petitions. 3. The last condition of prayer is faith. He only will truly supplicate assistance, who believes he shall receive it. This condition is made essential in the Scriptures to the validity of all prayer; —“let a man ask in faith; let

not him that wavereth think he shall receive anything of the Lord."

But prayer, so defined, is neglected by not a few. Many feel only the universal craving for some good they have not yet reached. And of those who ask relief of their wants, not a few have little confidence in obtaining it. Even in Christian communities there are multitudes who take no interest in this service. They acknowledge that they never practice secret devotion; even in the very house of God they do not join in the prayers; they merely listen to them, perhaps not so much as that, — they endure them. The prayer belongs to the minister, not to the people, and why should they join in what does not concern them?

The objections to prayer offered by such persons are sometimes intellectual. They do not think it will do any good. "Why ask one thing or another of God? We cannot change his mind nor his course of action; whether we pray or not, everything will proceed precisely as it now does." This is doubtless true, outwardly speaking. Prayer will not supersede the necessity of laboring; still, who cannot see that by making us feel the presence and the smile of our Father in Heaven, as we toil, it will render our labor cheerful, steady, and self-possessed, and thus enable us to do more, and better, than we could without it? Thus, if we cannot change the mind of God, we can change our own mind toward him; and, by gratitude for his good gifts, and submission under losses and disappointments, we can spread a bloom over our whole mortal existence.

“But why,” you ask, “is it not enough to do our own duty, to be industrious in our business, faithful at home, and in all relations to others, just, kind, and true? What need of adding to all this the form of prayer?” I answer, that the life is beyond question the great thing; there is nothing to be compared in importance with practical goodness. But who shall say that prayer will not aid one in the acquisition of this very goodness? One of the most practical writers in the New Testament is the Apostle James. He dwells so much on good works, that Luther, in his zeal for justification by faith, calls his epistle “an epistle of straw.” But note this, also; James is earnest above all others, if possible, in inculcating the duty of prayer. “If any of you lack wisdom,” are his words, “let him ask of God, and it shall be given him.” He always joins virtue and prayer together. After enjoining the former, he adds, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” The great Exemplar of all practical excellence, Jesus Christ, affirmed that “men ought always to pray.” And how did he sustain himself on that moral height which he occupied? He did not think prayer unessential, nor unimportant. On the contrary:

“Cold mountains and the midnight air
Witnessed the fervor of his prayer.”

In the breaking of bread, at the grave of Lazarus, when about to part with his disciples, — at all hours and on all occasions, — he was instant and earnest in

supplication to the Father. Who then are *we*, that we should presume to attempt leading a thoroughly good life, while our lips and our hearts are dumb before God?

Another obstacle to prayer with some, as they tell us, is, that "they are not spiritually minded; they do not feel an interest in religion; they have no desires or dispositions which lead them to worship God." But although thus conscious of, and confessedly, living without God in the world, there are moments when you feel the need of leading a better life. Sometimes heart and flesh cry out within you, and remonstrate against your present course. Heed these moments: they are the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Quench not that Spirit, but fan the divine spark into life. Now is the time to pray; do not imagine you are not good enough for that service. Every man is good enough to ask God to make him better. The only danger is in not praying at all. To silence these momentary voices, to drown the calls of conscience in business, pleasure, sense, and sin, that is indeed perilous, that is your chief and only danger.

"But my conduct," says another, "does not comport with the act of prayer. To engage in that holy service, one should be pure and perfect." No, not perfect, that no mortal man can be; but if you mean that one should live as he prays, that I admit. And prayer would assist you in living as you ought. It is the very thing you need to raise your character to the high point you desire it to reach. There is nothing which so calms the passions, and so points out our

duty, and helps us to perform it, as drawing nigh unto the Omniscient and all-sustaining One. "After earnest prayer," as another well remarks, "the mind is clearest, and the will is freest, and the judgment is wisest, and then thoughts come to us most like divine messages." Why, then, should not he who sincerely desires to know what is right, and to do it also, seek direction and strength from above?

"I cannot see," objects another, "the necessity, in any event, for praying so much as many do. There are times and places where I do not object to it; but they are few. In extraordinary circumstances, amid great trouble, in a sickness nigh unto death, in bereavement, or the exposure of one's life, then, and then only, it is proper to pray." "Why," said a seaman on one of our national ships, "why should we have prayers in this fine weather, when the wind is fair and we are making good headway? In a gale of wind, and when we are likely to go down, then is the time to pray." So think multitudes; prayer is only appropriate in danger or death. But why is it not becoming in sunshine no less than storm, in health as well as sickness, in our jubilant no less than our sad moments? We derive pleasure from conversing with a friend, not only in sorrow, but in joy. It is so in communion with God; the mere utterance of our feeling to Him gives satisfaction and relief to the spirit. "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks," so does a devout temper pant for the face of God. Prayer is the very life of the soul; and as the body can be sustained only by food, so the

mind requires for its true nurture this spiritual aliment. It is the very air, indeed, without which the inner, immortal man cannot so much as breathe. The soul is a ray of the Divinity ; and as it came from above, so its irradiations can continue only while we open our bosoms to the Infinite and ever-beaming Light. A true follower of Christ regards his devotions, not as a graceful accomplishment, but as the solid support of his existence, as the stay of his virtue, and the golden girdle of his spirit-man. He no more asks himself, when the morning breaks, " Shall I, or shall I not, pray ? " than he does whether he shall rise from his pillow and pursue the work of the day.

Prayer is needful, too, at all times. We need it in joy, that we may pour our souls out in thankfulness, and thus enhance our enjoyment. We need it in grief. In the words of Euthanasy, " There is no burden of the spirit but is lightened by kneeling under it. The bitterest feelings are sweetened by the mention of them in prayer ; and agony itself stops swelling, if it can only cry out sincerely, ' My God, my God. ' "

Our dependence upon the Father is constant ; constantly therefore should we supplicate his goodness. In temptation there is no such shield as prayer. If you doubt whether a particular motive is pure, refer it to Him, and the answer will be instant ; and if, after any deed you have done you feel reluctant to approach God and speak of that act to him, then it was undoubtedly wrong. When our recreations are innocent, we can ask his blessing upon them. If they

will not stand that test, then are they guilty. It is said of a distinguished French tragedian, that she is in "the habit of seeking in mental prayer, before going on the stage, the strength and nerve she exhibits in her different characters; and that she places implicit reliance on the religious inspiration thus sought." Unless she regards her vocation as a positive sin, why should she not ask power to succeed in it from God? We cannot safely begin the work of the day before we have looked up to God. The elder Webster was in the midst of a plea, when he fell, and his spirit was taken up to its home. On the desk in his office was found a prayer for light and help from above, written that very morning. *There* was genuine Christianity. Prayer and business, they should be kept always in this way side by side. At no hour of the day may we intermit our devotions. "At morn, at noon, and at night," said the Psalmist, "do I call on thy name." Even the disciple of Moham-med may teach us a lesson in this regard. Five times in the day does the muezzin ascend the minaret of the mosque, and, at his call, the faithful all bow in prayer. We need not utter our petitions audibly; to be instant in prayer is to maintain at all times its spirit. It may be vocal, or it may be mental; either is accepted, for

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or expressed."

And now for what shall we pray? Not for outward things alone, nor primarily. We need life,

health, food, and friends ; but there are other things we need still more. In that model of devotion, the Lord's Prayer, there is but one petition for outward good, " Give us this day our daily bread." The burden of the supplications is for spiritual gifts. So let it be in our daily devotions ; while we ask for gain or competence, for honor, or love, or even health and strength, it should be with deference to God. Then only do we pray aright when the refrain of each and every petition is those golden words, " Thy will be done." Pray for a mind clear and calm to discern that will, for a heart reconciled to it, for a life in unison with its behests, and full of good works. Pray for the pardon of your sins ; drink of the joy of confession ; and be assured that, even in the agony of conscious guilt, in supplicating forgiveness, and believing it can be attained, there is a joy as much higher than the best of earth's pleasures, as the heavens are above the earth.

"The broadest smile unfeeling folly wears
Less pleasing far than prayer's repentant tears."

But who ought to pray ? There are those who may hear all we have said, without self-application. Prayer, they feel confident, is only a task. It may be the duty of some persons, it is not theirs ; and why preach to *them* on this dry theme ? To such I would say, your objection to prayer holds good in regard to everything not yet tried. We cannot have faith, full faith, in anything, until we have tried it ourselves. The great principle of the Baconian phi-

losophy applies eminently to our subject. "Experiment is the sure guide." Experience, that is the only safe teacher. The Bible adopts this rule, "Taste, and see that the Lord is good." Do not stand by yourself, and look coldly on, and say there is nothing, and there can be nothing, in prayer. Try it yourself; ask of God, and then if you do not receive, — if after sincere, earnest prayer you find there is no good in it, — then you will be competent to pronounce it an illusion, or unessential to you.

But no man ever yet went in full faith, and with his whole heart, unto God, without receiving all that he sought. The very moment you open your bosom before him, he pours in light and joy; and you are conscious that his Spirit flows out to yours. It is as when you meet a dear friend; hand grasps hand, and eye meets eye; and as the fond voice strikes your ear, love vibrates along the chord; the sympathy is electric, and the union is entire. O that men would thus draw nigh unto God! Why will they keep back from him? Why linger, and shiver on the cold bank of irreligion and silence, when they have but to speak, and they will have crossed the dread stream, and will find themselves in the promised land? Again and again have I thought, as I have met a bereaved circle, with hearts ready to break, O why will you not pray? Why lie crushed beneath this stroke, and never look up, — never utter a word to Him from whom the stroke came? If you would only say, "My God, my God, hold me in thy arms," this strained cordage would relax; this mountain load would be taken off.

And who, now, is he that has no need to pray? The good man cannot do without it; he would not, if he could; it is to him the aroma of life's blossom. He associates all his duties to his family, to the community, and to his country,—all his joy in the smiles of parent, brother, sister, companion, child,—all with the dear Father who gives them. The sinner must pray. Who can doubt that the repentant inebriate, steeped in shame,—property, honor, health, life, thrown on the mad altar of appetite,—does indeed pray? He must sometimes beg God to help him break his chain. The debauchee, the reckless gamester, fallen woman,—who can question that, in many a lone and bitter moment, the wrung heart, amid all that external gayety, and those oaths and obscenities, is driven to God? It does actually, and most earnestly too, pray for deliverance, for restitution to purity and to peace.

The old need prayer to brace their trembling limbs, and open for them the everlasting gate. The parting petition of your Saviour you also would utter at last, as no strange words, but the expression of a familiar trust. Man in mid-life must pray; for then Mammon would crowd out God and eternity, and ambition would tread into the dust the heavenly spark. The young need prayer; of all ages this, if the comparison is ever proper, is the period most in unison with its true temper. So long as the heart is not yet estranged from childhood's devoutness, and while lust and passion and folly are as yet kept in check, the pleading, incorrupt soul asks of the Father

to preserve it, a gem for himself, and a pure savor for the race. The living must pray ; for while the world rushes in, and would lay waste our virtue, God only, sought and clung to, can keep us from guilt. The dying, they also, and how imperatively, are summoned to pray. Stand then, at life's goal, O prayerless man, and ask yourself how you can render up your final account, if you have not remembered the prayers of your mother, and breathed them forth through your whole life. Take the right position now ; that done, one thing only will be wanting, — live as you pray ; and then, with the serene faith of Christ on the cross, you will at last be enabled to say, not as addressing a stranger, but in the tones of an habitual and all-trusting affection : “ Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.”

XI.

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.

I SPEAK CONCERNING CHRIST AND THE CHURCH.—Ephesians v. 32.

No word connected with the great subject of religion has been more variously understood and employed, than the word Church. It has one range of meanings in the Bible, another as it is used by the several portions of the Christian world; and still a third is given to it by the community at large. The signification of Church in the original language of the Scriptures is, “an assembly,” called together for any purpose whatever. In the New Testament it is usually applied to Christian bodies of men; still, it is not confined to these. We find the “Church in the wilderness,” spoken of in Revelations, which refers to the meetings of the Israelites in the forty years’ exodus; and it is frequently applied to other assemblies of the Jews. It sometimes signifies the whole mass of Christians in all ages; as when Christ informs Peter that upon him he will build his Church. It implies elsewhere a gathering of Christians of particular cities, as when we read of “the seven churches of Asia.” It is sometimes applied to the members of one family; Paul sends salutations

to Priscilla and Aquila, and "the Church, which is in their house." In ecclesiastical history it is given to particular divisions of the Christian world, as the Catholic Church, the Episcopal, Presbyterian Church, and so forth. And these bodies often appropriate the name to themselves exclusively as "The Church," that is the only true Church.

Still another class of meanings is attached to it by the world at large, by which it is made to signify, First, The body of communicants. Secondly, The building in which Christian assemblies meet for worship. Thirdly, The interests of religion in general, as when we contrast Church and State.

I wish to speak of it at this time under still another aspect, and that is, as signifying the body of sincere, practical disciples of Christ, who unite in honoring his memory by all methods within their reach. In this sense I shall apply it usually to those who join in an organization as Christians, and manifest their love to Christ by communing at his table.

"The Church," — what is meant by that word when so employed? Not, I would say, to designate a class of persons who by joining the Church consider themselves perfect, or should be so regarded by others. One should unite with this body, not because he is, or feels himself to be, perfect, but for precisely the opposite reason. Conscious that he is imperfect, frail, and sinful, and feeling his need of being made better by drawing near in every way to Christ, he avails himself of his gracious invitation, "This do in remembrance of me."

Now there are those who demand that the Church be immaculate. Some go so far as apparently even to rejoice when a clergyman falls, or a layman, while in the Church, and so disgraces his position. But we would say to such persons that no body of men on earth, secular or sacred, has ever been immaculate. In the ark which contained Noah and his sons, Shem and Japheth, we find not only these pious men, but the polluted Ham; and even among the twelve selected to be apostles by Jesus himself, there were a Judas and a Peter.

By the Church we do not describe a class of Christians who set themselves in array against the world. It is no part of the occupation of a true Christian member to bring railing accusations against all who do not think, and act, like himself. Some, it is true, in the ardor of the religious meeting, tell us that gold is but dross, sense to be annihilated, and earth a dream and delusion. But these very persons do not live according to this theory; sometimes they go out of the house of God and worship that very Mammon they had there denounced. The true communicant, instead of abusing the world, will so use it as to harmonize his confession and his life.

Nor are we to draw our opinion of the Church from any of the various denominations of Christians. How they define it, what they teach as the Scriptural view of it, what they say we must become and be before uniting with the Church, is irrelevant to the whole matter. Not the dictum of Calvin, or the practice of the self-styled and exclusive "Evangelical,"

but the prescriptions of Christ, our only Lord and Master, — these are to be our guide, in judging what the Church is, who should unite with it, and what is required of the church-member.

Who are they that in reality constitute the Church of Christ? It must evidently be a “Broad Church,” not a little territory fenced about with the high walls of creeds and sectaries. Its basis should be so broad, that none who love the Lord Jesus should ever be excluded.

Manifestly the true Church, spiritual and invisible, is not confined to communicants alone. There is many a Christian, who is inwardly united to the Lord Jesus, while he does not rank with his avowed disciples. It is not assenting before men to articles of faith, nor binding ourselves by covenant, that brings the life of Christ into our souls. Nay, it is not partaking of these elements, — affecting as they are to the heart-believer, — that constitutes one a member of the true Church. Too long it has been imagined that the circle of communicants embraced all the piety and purity of Christendom. But the New Testament establishes no such criterion. To the early disciples this service was not the sign and seal of the Christian character; still less did they conceive that its observance rendered them holy, or was a charm against temptation and sin. They belonged to the Church of the First-born; they were heaven-seeking, man-loving believers; they were living members of that living body, whose head is Christ. This, and not merely partaking the ordinance, made them true church-members.

Nor, again, are all communicants of necessity united to the great invisible Church. One may appear at the table of the Lord punctually, eat and drink in his name, and yet be inwardly as far from any true communion in the body and blood of Christ, as some who never thought of this as their special duty. It is sad to think of the dark hypocrite, the frail backslider, and others, who, when they stand before the final tribunal, may plead, "Lord, were we not defenders of the genuine doctrine? Did we not maintain that none but we were thy true followers? Have we not often taught, and prayed in thy name, and done many wonderful things?" But the Judge will say, "By your fruits, not your professions, will your lot be determined. Come ye that have done good, come ye blessed of my Father, now and evermore."

Taking now the positive view of our subject, we may say, the true church-member recognizes Christ as to him "Head over all things." He alone is the channel of pure truth; he alone has the words of eternal life. This qualified him to speak with authority,—the authority of his God and our God, and hence with the authority of unpolluted truth.

Christ is regarded as also supreme in the life he himself led, and requires us to lead. We may differ from each other on many unimportant opinions; and in our spiritual condition and progress we may be very unlike. But still, there hangs before us all that one portrait of Christ; approach it on any side whatever, and the eye turns toward you. Millions

are every day looking at Christ ; and every individual sees him under an aspect suited to his own particular character and wants. And each finds that, as the scenes and forces of Nature,—the lofty mountain, the sublime heavens, the vast ocean, the majestic river, and the stupendous cataract,—express feelings we can never describe, so does Jesus Christ strike down to the very roots of our being, and evolve and quicken and express our inmost experiences. As we look at him, we become convinced that, although Christianity might, perhaps, have been born, and grown to maturity, and been established in the world without the record of the Gospel, — that this should have been done without a personal Saviour as its cornerstone and everlasting support, is inconceivable.

Now one who regards Christ in this light is drawn toward him ; desiring, in the first place, to share his spirit and life. His faith may be as yet dim, but he pleads, “ Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.”

“ Though like the wanderer,
The sun gone down,
Darkness be over me,
My rest a stone ;
Yet in my dreams I'd be
Nearer, my Lord, to thee,
Nearer to thee ! ”

And when he is conscious of sin and guilt, he looks unto Jesus ; and there he finds sympathy, the promise of pardon, and a help to peace. With his eye fixed on that exalted one, he may sometimes,

indeed, feel disheartened at his elevation, and join with a Christian writer who laments: "I learn the depth of my fall from the length of the chain let down in Christ to updraw me." But, admitting there is this wide chasm between him and ourselves, we are to remember his voice can sound across that chasm; his arm is so long that it can reach out to us and deliver us.

The moment we take the true stand-point, Christ himself, all influences combine in a beautiful harmony to aid our Christian life. This alone is wanting to transform to us the entire world. Were Christ always to us the central figure of earth's great moral landscape, what a rose-color would it impart to these now faded scenes of creation and Providence! Instead of calling our existence a dry and barren land, we should look upon it as all a spirit-world, ever fresh, ever teeming with life and beauty, and illuminated with the fore-splendors of a celestial glory.

Place Christ in the right position, and, as on his lips, while in this world, so on ours now, would be the sweet confidence, "Thy will, not mine, be done." However adverse the events and circumstances of the hour might be, there would be the perpetual acknowledgment, my Father hath done this; darkness is round about him at this moment; but I will still look up; and, however perplexing my lot, I will not doubt that when all is over here, I shall rush to his arms, and he will make the past clear to my sight, justify himself, and bring forth

from my grateful heart a new song, a song of eternal praise.

Now, whenever Christ stands in this attitude before the soul, it asks, "What more can I do to honor my Redeemer?" The mind turns to that point, in which the rays of his all-luminous character converge. "Christ loved the Church," writes an apostle; "and," to testify that love to the utmost, he "gave himself for it." He gave his words, his deeds, his wonder-works of power and grace, his perils and pains, and, to crown the whole, he gave his very life. This seen, we come to measure everything by the cross. He who regards temporal success, or fame and glory, or ease and mirth, as the great boon of humanity, will not appreciate the cross; for He who once hung upon it for our sakes failed of all these. But to one who, like Jesus, makes it his meat and drink to do, and to suffer, the whole will of God, of the many crowns resting on the Redeemer's head, none seems so radiant as the crown of thorns.

The desire to celebrate this dying love of Christ is what brings one to the table of communion. This rite has a fourfold purpose. 1. To cherish that gratitude, which is due to Christ. We need special occasions to call our minds to him. Do you say, "We can reverence him as well in our daily walk, as by coming to this table?" Instead of setting apart a particular day for meditating upon Christ, I would think of him every day; and not here alone, but everywhere. That is, no doubt, always desirable; but the practical effect of such a principle often is to

make one, not remember Christ always and everywhere, but forget him altogether. Some object to the Sabbath, and say, "Every day should be a Sabbath"; but the effect of such theories usually is, not to convert the six week-days into Sabbaths, but to lower the Sabbath to a level with them. Hence, if we really appreciate Christ, and have a sense of our obligations to him, we shall welcome these set days, when we are called to muse on his character, and pour forth our thanks for his redeeming love.

2. Another purpose of the communion is, to increase the honor of Christ among men. They, who themselves venerate his name, are anxious to give their testimony publicly in his favor. They do not ask what apologies they can find for absenting themselves from this ordinance; but rather, "What more can I do for his elevation? How can I induce this, my brother or sister, to prize his sacrifice and walk in his steps? I will go to his table, and haply they may follow me thither."

3. Yet again, by this rite we show forth the Lord's death; we commemorate that event, and thus keep it prominent in our hearts. We cannot pass a single day without the need of that same spirit manifested by Christ on the cross. To be righteous and just, to be tender-hearted and merciful, to cherish a forgiving temper, to be always patient and resigned, — how can we so well arm ourselves for the spiritual conflicts essential to all this, as by coming statedly to this memorial service, and inhaling its holy and self-denying atmosphere? If we keep back from it,

Christ may well put to us the melting interrogatory, "What! can you not,—so much of your precious life as you give to earth and sin,—can you not come here, ever and anon, and 'watch with me one hour?' "

4. The visible Church tends, in its true use and influence, to render us in mind, heart, life, and character like our Lord and Master. We cannot partake aright of these symbols of his living and dying love, and feel no impulse toward a better course, no desire to master temptation, and to bear more serenely the trials of our lot. In many an hour we shall feel his soul-constraining power; it will help us to break the chain of guilt, and stir us in our selfish ease, and prompt us to go about doing good. We shall look forward to this touching occasion with joy, and reflect sweetly upon it, as setting up for us many a pillar of hope, resolution, and strength. It will not be a dead form, an idle ceremony, but full of vitality; quickening us to good thoughts, cherishing in us repentance of our sins, and infusing new vigor for the great contests of the illimitable future.

Who shall disparage an element of such power as this? Who deny the efficacy of the Church, the true Church of Christ? It points us to that emblem, under which we are to conquer temptation, and rise to the heights of a personal consecration. It takes us out of ourselves, and leads us to the broadest philanthropy. We feel, as we sit here, that, as a living, eloquent writer of our own faith affirms: "It was the cross that opened to the nations the blessed

ways of life and love. Hence this memorial of his death celebrates the universality and spirituality of the Gospel; declares the brotherhood of men, the fatherhood of Providence, the personal affinity of every soul with God. That," he well adds, "is no empty rite, which overflows with these conceptions."

And now am I asked, who should unite with the Church? I answer, all who sincerely desire, and strive to lead a Christian life.

Have you a sense of the truth and reality of religion? Do you feel an interest in the deep things of God? Are you solicitous in all things to follow Christ? If so,

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness he requireth
Is to feel your need of him."

I am glad, for your sakes, brethren and friends, we have this day a voice from Heaven that joins with the preacher in attesting the value of the Church of Christ. That distinguished author, the first to bring respect to American literature from abroad, after a long life devoted to works, of which there is no line which, as a Christian man, dying he could have wished to blot, has, within the past week, been suddenly taken to his final rest. We might dwell on his many virtues, so amiable and so genial as to win the love of all who knew him. So modest and humble, that, instead of exulting in the pride of his

glorious career as an author, he recently said to a friend, he would fain "write over" every book he had produced; so full of sweetness and genuine affection, that with all his greatness, he could fold a little child to his arms; so grateful for every attention at his home, and for relief in his infirmities, as to address remote kindred as his own daughters; instinct with a noble patriotism, which prompted him to toil on till he fell in the furrow, penning the last pages of that immortal work devoted to his immortal namesake; — on these elevated and tender qualities we might ponder long.

But, I wish above all to say that Washington Irving had been for years a communicant in the Church of Christ. Though honored at home and abroad, in the midst of affluence, illustrious in two hemispheres, he did not count it beneath him to sit at the table of the Lord Jesus. He had been for some four or five years an officer in the Church; and the very last Sabbath of his life he was seen in the house of God. Who does not feel that, in the spirit-wreath which now encircles his brow no leaf is so bright and ever-during as this which bears the name of that Saviour he loved, honored, and so faithfully obeyed?

Would God I could stretch forth my arms to the widest, and utter to-day some word that would win you also to this service.

"Come who will, the voice from heaven
Like a silver trumpet calls;
Come who will, the Church hath given
Back the echo from its walls.

“Come to rivers ever flowing
From the high eternal throne;
Come where God, his gifts bestowing,
In the Church on earth is known.”

Come, and sit here, and meditate on the image of your Saviour, and imbibe his temper, and be filled with his martyr-like devotion to God and man. Come, and enjoy with his Church an antepast of that high festival, at which they shall gather from North and South, East and West, and sit down with the saints in bliss and with the Lamb who bled for them; and where the Father who gave us his Son, and who still loves us and all his great family, will bless them for evermore.

XII.

BRING ME UP SAMUEL.—NEW YEAR.

BRING ME UP SAMUEL.—1 Samuel xxviii. 11.

THE wise and good Samuel, having reigned over Israel in the fear of God, had departed this life, and now slept in the tomb of his fathers. Saul had been anointed king in his stead; but he obeyed not the voice of the Lord; and as a punishment for his sins the Philistines were sent out against him to destroy him and his host. Dismayed at the prospect, and in the hope of receiving counsel in his exigency, he repairs to a woman, “possessed,” in the phrase of that period, “with a familiar spirit,” and commands her to bring up Samuel from the dead. Behold, at her word his form is made to appear; “an old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.” “I have called thee,” says the agonized Saul, “that thou mayest make known to me what I shall do.”

There are seasons when we also, oppressed with a sense of our errors and sins, call from the depths of our soul for spiritual counsel and deliverance from evil. We are seldom so far lost in the dreams and illusions of life that its recurring eras do not startle us to self-consideration. A birthday

overtakes us, or the old year passes out and a new one comes in, and we shrink from the thought that another year has fled irretrievably from our short span. We have just passed one of these solemn eras ; and to-day, this first Sabbath of a new year in our lives, is such a period as I advert to. Conscience, if it be quick and true, is now saying, "Bring me up Samuel." Behold the reanimated messenger from the past appears. And now we are brought face to face with the accusing and the excusing monitor in our own breast. "An old man cometh up, and he is covered," as was the form of Samuel, "with a mantle." Yes, what a mantle is ordinarily thrown over this our inner being ! So unacquainted are we with our true selves, that sometimes others, little as we imagine they can penetrate our secret souls, know us better than we know ourselves. Designedly and studiously, it would often seem, we cover up our sins, and make a fair show of virtues, while within we are essentially impure. Yet, however skilled in self-delusion, we cannot conceal the prominent points of our character from one another. The light ever and anon flashes forth, not only from our open deeds and words, but from recesses for the moment left unguarded, from undesigned tokens, intimations, and gleams. So that we may fitly join in the prayer of the poet,

" O would some power the giftie gie us,
To see ourselves as others see us ! "

It is even possible for one to have faults, glaring and notorious to others, and yet converted by a magic

self into graces. Censoriousness, for example, a sin against which Christ and his apostles preached continually, shall flower out in full, and laud itself under the name of "plain-speaking." We wander far from that angel temper which rejoiceth not in iniquity; and if we find no actual joy in the error of our neighbor, it gives us no sincere grief. And instead of going straight to him to ratify or correct the evil report, we speak it in the ear of the next one we meet, and it is soon proclaimed on the house-top.

It is amazing to see this array of forces which keep the soul ignorant of itself. God has set his own light within us; Christ shines all around us and upon us; but the spirit draws over herself a veil so thick that the rays of self-knowledge cannot pierce through it.

This outward world throws a mantle over us. Things seen cloud and darken our immortal part. The temporal is near, the eternal is afar off; and it is hence to us as though it were not. Flesh and sense are solid and palpable, but the soul, — what is that? What we cannot see and touch passes for a shadow. And so the body, made only for a spirit-garment, becomes to us the whole man. We wrap its folds closely around us, and think all will then go well with us. But alas, what seeds of moral decay and death are thus covered up! This body, instead of being a delicate transparency, letting the soul shine through it, becomes a prison-wall, rising dark and massive around our true selves, and shutting God and Christ, heaven and all heavenly things from our sight.

The cares of life, its possessions and pursuits, are a thick mantle which hides man from himself. What we have we can plainly see, but not what we are, — that is a profound mystery, — a land we never yet explored. “Stock in trade,” we in effect say, “stocks in the mine, the bank, the railway, ships and freights, — these we can take hold of, these are realities. But the soul, there is no certainty about that; there is no probability, hardly is it possible, that stocks in divine things can, by any turn of the times, become valuable, worth any earnest pursuit or hearty confidence.”

Our daily avocations overrun the territory of God. The means of subsistence and the calls of gain, instead of being steps up that ladder on which angels ascend and descend, become the end and aim of our being. Eager to rise in an outward regard, we seize the opportunities of advancement, power, or fame. The privilege of promotion in the realm of God and goodness we count a small thing. Dull is the Bible, and dry are those pages that teach us the way of godliness, faith, and virtue; but bright are the lines which record, in the form of day-book, ledger, or journal, a balance in our favor.

Pleasure, frivolity, and thoughtlessness are another mantle concealing us from ourselves. To many, life presents no higher aspect than that of a scene for passing enjoyment. Instead of seeking recreation, as it should be sought, that is, *as* recreation, they would fain make their whole existence a life-long holiday. This leads them to count society as

their all in all. Nothing is so fearful to them as solitude and self-communion. Such persons can never truly know themselves. But one thing they do, and must discern, — the illusiveness of their course: —

“ Their present is a weary scene,
And always wished away ;
They live on ‘ to be ’ and ‘ has been,’ —
Never on to-day.”

Self-indulgence continually mocks and cheats its votaries: they say of laughter, “ It is mad,” and of mirth, “ What doeth it ? ” Thus are they, — spiritually speaking, and in reference to the sweet satisfactions of a frank and a pure self-intercourse, and a true peace of conscience, — dead while they live.

A mantle is thrown over the inner and accusing monitor by our reluctance to examine the motives which ordinarily and supremely control us. The difference between the characters of mankind springs primarily, I think, from the culture, or neglect, of the habit of a conscientious and thorough self-inspection.

One searches for his defects as an incentive to personal reformation and improvement, while another seeks out and dwells upon chiefly his good points, his sources of self-congratulation. It is the old contrast between the Pharisee and the publican in the temple.

Now, to brood over our faults in gloom and despondency is wrong ; but the opposite course, that of designedly keeping any fault out of our own sight and thought, is fatal to the soul. It is as if the trades-

man, in closing the accounts of the year, should examine only what is in his favor, passing over, knowingly, his every debt. Where would the man of business stand, did he annually commit this egregious folly? Where does that soul stand which yearly and daily pursues this very practice? How will it appear, and what must be its portion, when its great and final account must be audited before the Omniscient Judge?

“Bring me up Samuel,” — such is the call of our interior man, when, on the commencement of a new year, we regard ourselves, not according to the calendar of time, but in a spiritual aspect. To know our true age, we must review our past privileges, our means of Christian life and growth. In this light, though gray hairs be not upon us, yet in the admonitions of bygone days, in the calls of Providence, and the messages of grace, in the great school of Jesus Christ, we are undeniably old. Where were you born? Under a Gospel sky. Who were your parents? Christian people. You have enjoyed opportunities, how many! for salvation, for instruction, and moral impression. The Sabbath has been yours, and the house of God, and the call of the preached Word. You have been surrounded by good social influences, — walked on Christian soil, lived, moved, and had your being in a spiritual atmosphere. God has spoken to you personally, by the still, small voice within; over and over he has said to you, “Turn and live.” Old, then, you are, emphatically, in the invitations of Christ and the warnings of the Spirit. Of

a life passed amid scenes like yours it may well be said : —

“ One hour of parted time a world is poor to buy.”

Yet more, in the light of our past lives, and by the stamp of our present character, none of us are young. This experience of wrong doing, this bitter and baleful acquaintance with evil, proves us indeed old. Time is to be measured by the deeds we do, and wisdom is the gray hair unto man ; so, too, the youth may be, as a sinner, an hundred years old. Worse than stiffened limbs is a hardened conscience ; sadder than cheeks furrowed by years is a heart corrugated and rigid with impenitence. When we think of our evil habits, our long-cherished worldliness, our devotion to appetite, how many years we have been yielding to the lusts of pride, envy, and jealousy ; when we perceive our insensibility to God, and our indifference to the spirit-call of holy things ; when we consider our relations to others, the ease and unconcern of our minds, our destitution of a deep and steady self-oblivion, the cross of Christ never yet laid fairly on our shoulders, — then we realize that we are fearfully old.

The past and the present have been before us, and now comes the future. “ Bring me up Samuel ” is its summons. Let the prophet-voice make known to me what I shall now do. It is said, “ There are but two eras in life, — the passage from the ideal to the actual, and that from age to eternity.” Through the first we all move with speed ; the dreams of our

youth soon vanish before the realities of the stern world. And now it remains for us to pass from age to eternity.

Stand up, then, thou pilgrim on earth, thy face set toward the spirit-land, and answer before God : How old art thou ? How old, — not dating from the family-record, but from that surer page, the Lamb's Book of Life ? Are you old in the ways of religion, the Father having been long since enshrined in your heart ? Then stir up the gift that is in you ; enter with new zeal on that spirit-conflict which terminates only with life. Are you old in years, — old, as man reckoneth ? Then is your time indeed short. Hear what the Spirit saith : to-day it bids you lay the remnant of your strength at once on the altar of God ; awake to righteousness before you hear that dread cry, " Too late ! too late ! " Are you in the prime of your days, and yet mature in the love of this world, a wide wanderer from Christ and his cross ? Are you a man, as yet in his meridian, but old in wrong courses, long a stranger to the God of love, with no relish for heaven's feast of goodly and gracious fruits ? O live not on in this way ! Unloose that mantle of impure thoughts, low purposes, and earth-enclosed deeds, and see your true self : —

" There are, who, thoughtless, haste to life's last goal ;
There are, who time's long-squandered wealth despise :
' I 've lost a life,' — this marks their finished scroll."

Be not you of their number ; in the freshness of your being, in your manly days, acquaint yourself with God, and be at peace.

The mere number of our years is never the most important of our concerns. It is to know how our years, few or many, have been occupied. Age should not of itself make us sad. True, we can never recall our youth and bloom, nor our meridian vigor. Gone once, they are gone forever. But our spiritual age can be renewed. Your heart, over which years and decades of years have passed, can become morally young,—young in Christ and a Christian consecration, young in the beauty of holiness. You can cause the shadow on the great dial-plate of God's spiritual luminary to pass backward, and know henceforth the joy of a rejuvenated being.

Looking into the record of Jesus Christ, whose affecting death a part of us this day commemorate,—God grant another new year may find many of you, brethren, added to our company!—how old do we find ourselves? Are we in the manhood of Christian principles, tried and found true to duty in our domestic, social, private, and public relations? Do we show ourselves good men, good women, treading closely after Christ, ready to live, like him, for others, and to offer all we have and all we are on the altar of human well-being?

You have all laid your plans, I doubt not, for the year that has now opened,—what business you will pursue, how you will arrange your household affairs, whether to live here or live there, to secure this or that enjoyment, to seek social or civil elevation, to get gain, or live safely on your means;—what about Heaven? Have you also provided a place in those

upper mansions? If you have not, now is the time, within these walls, dedicated to such acts, and eloquent with the voices of the departed,—pleading through the angel lips of one gone in the fulness of a good old age, and that a Christian age, another in the midst of his manliness, one in the bloom and promise of boyhood, and another in the beauty of opening womanhood, and another still, the unblemished lamb of a few months,—let not their blended calls pass all unheeded. Let us each turn our hearts, — God helping us, — toward the Heavenly City. To-day, my brother, my sister,

“Devoutly yield thyself to God ;
And on his grace depend ;
With zeal pursue the heavenly road,
Nor doubt a happy end.”

XIII.

THE GREATNESS OF CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

WHOSOEVER WILL BE GREAT AMONG YOU, SHALL BE YOUR MINISTER; AND WHOSOEVER OF YOU WILL BE THE CHIEFEST, SHALL BE SERVANT OF ALL. — Mark x. 43, 44.

CHRISTIANITY has introduced into this world a new estimate of the relations between human beings. Of old it was considered degrading to serve a fellow-man. To labor for another, especially to perform any humble task, was thought debasing. He only was exalted who kept others in subjection to himself. The princes of the Gentiles exercised dominion over them, and they that were great exercised authority upon them.

The love of power, combined with indolence, has led man in all ages to trample on his fellow-man. Might has made right, and the strong have kept the weak in bondage. Slavery, that monstrous injustice and father of sins, has naturally fostered the erroneous idea that to serve another, even voluntarily, is degrading. The performance of any work usually allotted to the slave, is associated with the meanness of his condition, and is hence thought menial in itself. War also has tended to propagate the same

false estimate of honor and dishonor. Formerly the captive was chained to the car of the conqueror, and doomed to perpetual servitude. Hence to do the duty of a prisoner of war was thought a disgrace. To be great, many conceive, is never to soil the hands by personal labor, and to shun, under all circumstances, those tasks commonly performed by the servant.

But it is not so with those who follow Christ. He came to reverse the world's estimate of greatness; "He that is greatest among you," he said then, and says now, to his disciples, "let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." Not he who sits on a throne deserves honor, but he that does good to his brother, —

"A nobleman in heart is he,
With mind for his nobility."

When Christ was on earth, the Pharisees loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogue. Greatness, according to their standard, consisted in being called of men, "Rabbi, rabbi." With one word Christ swept away this paltry ambition, and warns us to be called masters by no man. "One is your Master," said he, "and that is Christ; he that will be greatest among you, shall be your servant."

But why did our Saviour utter this language? How does it appear that service is greatness? It is manifest from its being a natural growth of the prime Christian quality, which is humility. Throughout

his mission Jesus Christ magnified this virtue; he that humbled himself should be exalted. His chief blessings descended on the meek and the lowly. When his disciples, burning with ambition, ask, "Who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" he calls a little child and sets it before them as a pattern of Christian greatness. "So gentle," he would say, "so modest and unassuming,—fresh from its Creator's hand, unsoiled by pride and sin,—look on this little child, and become, like him, docile and unambitious, then you will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven; for then you will not selfishly aspire to promotion and place, but will seek to elevate others. It is by serving, not by being served, by consenting to do what you can and all you can for those who need your aid, that you walk in the path of true greatness."

And not the Bible alone, but nature also, shows the value of the trait I describe. The most powerful agents in creation are honored because they *are* agents, that is, actors, workers, servants in the universe. The sun is a glorious object; but what constitutes its chief glory? Not the fact that it shines so splendidly and draws admiration to itself. Not, that it is worshipped, or has been, in India, Peru, or elsewhere. No, its honor consists in doing good to others; in that it pours down its generous rays to warm and fertilize the earth; in that it is a minister, that is, a servant, shedding light and joy over all animated creatures. It is the chief among the great, because it illuminates the wide world, visiting with its beams the peasant no less than his lord.

And what is the liberal atmosphere but a servant? The breezes wait round our dwellings, the air ministers to our life and health; it wafts our ships, it drives away stagnation and pestilence, it lifts the bird on its course, and vivifies and exhilarates wherever it goes. The waters also perform the humblest tasks for man. They do not exalt themselves and rise up to the mountain-tops, but they descend and condescend for our sakes; they trickle down the hill-sides, they run meekly through the valleys. They travel on in patient service, whether through the magnificent aqueduct, that from huge reservoirs and with gigantic pipes courses on for miles to bless a city, or whether at our bidding they gush up in springs for the table, or descend in gentle showers to the cistern. Great is the work of the waters, and their greatness is to serve.

Look now at the example of our Saviour. He not only drew lessons of humility and beneficence from objects around him, but he constantly exemplified these virtues himself. The Jews looked for a Messiah who should come with pomp and pride, sitting on a throne, receiving incense from his subjects, and attended by a retinue of slaves. But how unlike all this was the Christ of the New Testament! He came with no crown on his head, but in the form of a servant. He made himself of no reputation, he expressly declared that he "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," that is, to serve. He did not sit at meat surrounded by menials, — "I am among you," said he, "as he that serveth." To

consummate his touching example, at the last festival before his death, he actually washed the feet of his disciples and wiped them with his own hands. What then are *we*, that we should think it a derogation from our dignity to do for another what the Master did for the disciple? Who shall say, that to serve our brethren in any form is degrading? Nay, rather would I ask, who that desires real honor and greatness, the blessing of Christ, will not stoop as low as he did, that he may afterward rise as high?

The doctrine of Christ is illustrated by his great Apostle to the Gentiles, whose epistles abound in persuasives to service. "All of you," he says, "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility." "Be courteous, have fervent charity, do good, seek peace"; as if he had said, "He that will be greatest, let him be servant of all." The life of Paul likewise is full of this same spirit: he labored in season and out of season for the cause of Christ. Whether by the toil of his pen or his hands, by the humblest personal attentions or by larger gifts to the Church, he made himself, as he truly averred, "servant unto all." His joy on earth and his hope of heaven were kindled and sustained amid constant service and sacrifice.

The text before us not only takes away the old dishonor attached to labor, but it makes it a positive honor to work for the good of others. It introduces a new scale of merits and rewards. It makes elevation depend, not on the degree to which any individual or class serve us, but that in which we volun-

tarily serve them. We rise, not in proportion to the number who wait our beck, or who follow in our train, but according to the number we can benefit. To serve a single individual is honorable ; and the more neglected and despised those we assist are, the better for us. Before honor is humility ; to secure true honor, therefore, one must humble himself, and do the least thing he can for another. We may wait at the bedside of the poorest of God's children, with the consciousness that we do not stoop, but rise, in so doing.

Yes, it is the motive which gives complexion to our every act. What we do with a single, disinterested motive, let it be done where it may or to whom it may, is honorable ; all usefulness confers true respectability and true dignity. It is only selfishness, unreasonable claims upon others, and calls for their service, that degrade us. He is not the really great man who gathers round him most worldly honors, or who lives in luxury and indolence, with a troop to wait his nod. The great man is not ministered unto, but ministers ; and, be he rich or poor, high or low, in man's esteem, he can say always, with the noble Psalmist, " I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." If the cause be elevated, then is the service.

Look for a moment into history, and see who, according to this principle, have been chiefest among men. Are they the Louis Fourteenth's, the Cæsars, the Napoleons, or Ghengis Khans ? Are they the

kings and warriors who enslaved, and who were served by others? Nay, these are fast fading from the firmament of greatness; and others, stars in God's own hand, are coming out, brighter and brighter. Anotonine, Henry Fourth of France, Oberlin, Howard, — these are of that class, who will shine on forever; for they were servants, genuine servants, of their race. Washington will live, not because he had titles attached to him, General or President forsooth, but because he served others; not seeking, but declining promotion; shrinking modestly from the prominence and responsibilities of distinction, and accepting honors only that he might serve his country and his God. For a bright illustration of our subject, enter the walks of philanthropy, and read, if you will, of Clarkson. He began his course by gaining the first prize at an English University. The subject given him for a theme was this, "Is it right to make slaves of others against their will?" As he rode home from Cambridge to London, the thought flashed upon him, "If what I have written is true, some person should see these calamities of which I have written," that is, the slave-trade and slavery itself, "to an end." Though but twenty-four years old, he then and there resolved himself to undertake it. He saw the sacrifice it would cost him, but he never turned his eye back. "I had," he says of himself, "ambition. I had a thirst after worldly interests and honors; and I could not extinguish it at once. But at length I yielded, not because I saw any reasonable prospect of

success in the new undertaking, but in obedience, I believe, to a higher Power." Clarkson lived, however, to witness the actual success of his lowly work in the abolition, throughout Great Britain, of human slavery. At the age of eighty-seven, having for more than half a century served those in bonds, and enjoyed "a good man's calm, a great man's happiness," he passed up to that pure realm where the small and great are gathered together, and "the servant is free from his master."

The topic of this discourse touches our daily, practical pursuits. "Man," it has been said, "is ambitious." Some regard this principle of our nature as full of guilt, and would therefore eradicate it. But Jesus Christ did not; he only changed the modes and end of its action. He would make us still seek promotion; but not that of this world: his promotion consists in doing the largest amount of good. He appeals to our love of greatness, not to quench it, but give it a higher and nobler direction. We may, we ought to cherish the spirit of ambition, a moral ambition, a desire and a determination to rise. But how? to what end? and by what means? We are to rise, not by being ministered unto, but by ministering. Onward and upward in this path is to be our course; until we reach that sublime elevation where we shall be the chiefest of Christ's followers, because we are servants, — not of one or a few, or of those we cannot help serving, — but, according to our gifts and opportunities, are voluntarily, and down to the humblest tasks, servants of *all*.

Henceforth let us enter and pursue this high walk. In every moment of relaxing principle or incoming pride, let the articulate voice of One greater than the greatest of mortals, be heeded in our ear. Let us not cherish the vulgar ambition of being ministered unto by others, and reigning over them ; but that Christian ambition which seeks out, that it may do good to, the needy, the suffering, the sinful ; bound with those who are in bonds, helping the fallen, saving the lost. Thus can we best save others and save ourselves. For Christ himself hath said, “Who-soever shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple, in my name, shall not lose his reward.”

XIV.

TEMPTATION.

THERE HATH NO TEMPTATION TAKEN YOU BUT SUCH AS IS COMMON TO MAN : BUT GOD IS FAITHFUL, WHO WILL NOT SUFFER YOU TO BE TEMPTED ABOVE THAT YE ARE ABLE ; BUT WILL WITH THE TEMPTATION ALSO MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE, THAT YE MAY BE ABLE TO BEAR IT. — 1 Cor. x. 13.

THE truth affirmed here in relation to the disciples at Corinth, is one of general application. We all incline to believe, some of us feel quite certain, that our own temptations are uncommon, greater, and more numerous than those usually incident to mankind. Had we only the ordinary temptations to encounter, we should find little difficulty in leading a pure life. But with such strong passions and such appetites as ours, and so unfavorably situated too, how is it possible to escape without sin? Our business is a peculiar one ; it tries one's honesty and unselfishness as no other can. Our associates are the worst we could have ; because, instead of encouraging us to do right, and setting us the true example, they seem only to lead us astray. And then, for our immediate connections and relatives, how unfortunate we are. To live as such or such an one does, where all are so pure and exemplary, why it could not but keep us in the straight path to heaven.

Now this view of ourselves serves to repel the shafts of conscience, to retard if not prevent the motions of penitence, and to make us content in our sins. Its tendencies lie all in that direction; and the influence it entails, varying in amount of course with individuals, is evil, and that only, continually. Where it does not quench, it must at least "grieve the Spirit," and throw impediments in the way of our reconciliation to the Father.

But the doctrine of Paul, and not ours, is the true one. We are mistaken in the estimate of our moral disadvantages. There hath no temptation taken *us* but such as is common to man.

Temptation besets all classes of characters. The most depraved are of course tempted; their offences are evidence on the front of this fact. Those also who sin less frequently and heinously must be subject to temptation. We speak often and freely of the faults of our neighbor; but we forget that as are his faults such must be his temptations. Instead, therefore, of being less tempted than we are, his repeated transgressions prove him to be far more so, — grievously, irresistibly tempted, as we should say were his case our own. Then for the best of our race, they also do not escape this ordeal; for were they exposed and allured to no evil, they would surely commit none, — they would be perfect men. But, being imperfect, they have infirmities and blemishes in their character which bring them into the very same category with ourselves.

All occupations involve, more or less directly, the

access of temptation. The merchant is tempted to fraud, and to incur great and unjustifiable risks, and, above all, in proportion to his success he is exposed to the vortex of worldliness and a consuming irreligion. The mechanic is tempted to promise when he knows he cannot perform, to substitute show for reality in his work, to give himself,—and perhaps on the plea that his family require it,—so exclusively to labor as to neglect mind and soul, and become of the earth, earthy. So of all manual pursuits; in them the hands are warring against the heart, and blessed is he in whom the victory is with the latter.

Nor are intellectual engagements free from temptation. They spread their snares, it is true, less in our sight; but none the less certainly may they decoy and entangle us. Indeed, the man of business and the manual laborer have one advantage in this respect, since their temptations are for the most part obvious; they are daily seen and felt; the warning voice is uttered distinctly in their ear. But the student, and all whose avocation is solely of the mind, are subject to unseen, subtle, and therefore the most perilous of tempters. Where the intellect is of necessity constantly tasked by our calling, it easily absorbs the affections. It may also nurture pride, captivate the soul, and drag its victim into a bondage all the more fearful, because the cords it binds on are so slender and silken.

Every age of the world has its own temptations. In ruder periods we find the crimes of violence, personal assaults and injuries, prevail. Civilization and

refinement do not destroy the tempter ; they only change the direction of his efforts. Hence offences against property now predominate. Craft and dishonesty increase. The character, instead of the body, becomes the chief object of moral obliquities. The exterior man is more polished, less grossly addicted to vice and crime ; but the heart may be still as untamed as the Arabian courser. The man may be as fierce within as was ever Goth or Vandal without.

Furthermore, every part of our nature is accompanied by its temptations. The body solicits to evil through the senses ; appetite entices one and constrains another. Animal pleasure has its votaries, that “ lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock and the calves out of the midst of the stall ; that chant to the sound of the viol, and drink wine in bowls, and forget the God who made them.”

The moral nature, especially conscience, is fraught with temptations. Who is not prompted at times to soothe this inward disturber ? to bring down the standard of God* to that of man ? to effect a compromise between duty and inclination, self-sacrifice and ease, the present and the future ? Smooth is the way, and broad too, that allures us to give our noblest affections to vanity, folly, and guilt, rather than to Him who endowed us with this gift for his own service and honor. Religion itself is not exempt from dangers ; the pious are tempted to lean on their past experience, and to look down upon and lord it spiritually over the miserable sinner.

So is it that the good and the evil, the rude and the cultivated, the social and the retired, all responsible beings in all periods and conditions of life, must enter the wilderness of temptation.

Scarcely then can a graver question arise than this: How are we to explain the apparently mysterious, yet incontestible fact, that all men, without a single exception, are tempted? Before meeting this inquiry, let us advert to the views usually entertained on this subject. What is thought of temptation?

It is commonly regarded as an unmixed evil. "This seducer of the weak," you will hear it said; "this beleaguer of the strong; this Egyptian river, bringing forth frogs, that come into our houses and chambers, and into our ovens and kneading-troughs, — who can consider it other than a curse to mankind? Temptation is of course to be totally deprecated. Happy is he who has never felt its power; happy, rather, could there be such an one."

With this view of it, men proceed, First, to charge it upon Satan. There must be some malicious being that enters our hearts, and stirs us up to these wicked thoughts and deeds. This idea ran through the ancient religions of the East. The evil principle was embodied by Zoroaster in the form of Ahriman, who had agents for temptation in this world. We find the Jews, after their captivity in Babylon, adopting from the heathen the conception of Satan. From the same source came their Beelzebub and Belial, their Lucifer and Asmodeus; and from them the Chris-

tian world have imbibed the belief in one mighty evil spirit. The Manicheans said, Satan had existed from eternity. The early fathers used the sign of the cross as a defence against this being, and erected crucifixes where he was supposed most frequently to appear. The Church appointed certain officers, called "exorcists," to drive out the devil. All know that Luther once threw his inkstand at this personage, for disturbing him as he was translating the Scriptures. We may smile at these things, but how few in the Christian Church do not still retain the impression that there must be some being, out of themselves, that instigates them to do wrong? Were he destroyed, they should then travel life's moral courses by the gallant steamship or the fleet car, instead of creeping along at this poor rate, now falling, now rising a little, and anon sinking hopelessly to the earth.

But, perhaps, we think ourselves too enlightened to yield to this ancient superstitious belief. We are persuaded that temptation does not come from the prince of darkness; but it proceeds, we think, from a mysterious Providence. We take the petition, "Lead us not into temptation," literally, and imagine that God does actually cause men to be tempted, that he *leads* them into what we cannot but view as evil. "I do sin, and that often, and grievously," says one, "but it is all owing to a natural infirmity." "I was born," says the tippler, "with an intolerable thirst for strong drink." "God made me," cries infuriated passion, "with a temper I

cannot possibly control." Or, if this be not the alleged source of sin, it is charged on our circumstances. "Why were we placed amid this host of obstacles to virtue and piety? Had our Creator allotted us a situation favorable to goodness, and where we could have easily controlled our wrong propensities, we might have been upright and pure. But here we are, thronged and besieged by temptations. Our companions, our engagements, and our leisure, all bear us downward. Strange ordination of Heaven!"

In reply to these apologies for wrong-doing,—for such they virtually are,—it must be said that the Scriptures affirm, that "God tempteth no man," but that "every man,"—and we of course in the number,— "every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." And if God does not tempt us, neither can there be any Satan, any creature of his hand, on whom we may lay our guilt. The Evil One can be only evil personified; as Paul says, "It is no more I, but sin that dwelleth in me." The idea, indeed, of a being, omnipresent, omniscient, and little less than omnipotent, commissioned by our Father in heaven to torment his own children, is so revolting to reason, and so repugnant to justice, to say nothing of mercy, that we could not believe it would be cherished in this age, did not facts compel us to see that it still is so.

But if there be no Satan for a tempter, and if God does not himself tempt us directly, what shall we say of the origin of this mysterious experience? It is

permitted, I answer, by Providence ; and that not for evil, but for a wise and gracious purpose.

It serves to test our faith. "Count it all joy," says an apostle, "when ye fall into divers temptations, knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience"; and when that has done its perfect work, we are told the Christian will "become perfect and entire, wanting nothing." It was temptation that proved Abraham firm in his faith. No man can be assured of his trust in God until he has been called to some test of it. Hence the riches of our trials in adversity, sickness, and bereavement. It is not until the cup has been placed to our own lips, that our faith and submission become established. Tribulation, — dread it as we may, and often must, — lies quite across our path to heaven. We cannot remove it; we cannot pass round it; there it is, and we must meet and surmount it.

For humility's sake it must needs be that we suffer temptation. If pride, even now, lurks in the heart, and vitiates so much of the Christian's life, what would he become should God guarantee him immunity from every temptation? Not the arch-apostate of Milton, — above temptation, because himself the king of tempters, — would tower in a loftier and more unhallowed pride than would this mere man of earth. Merciful is he who stays this impending calamity, and breaks the snare set by eminence in talent, position, and influence, by the solemn declaration that, "to whom much is given, of him will much be required." So do the mighty, if they

are wise and discerning, tread their steep path cautiously, and in lowliness of spirit; and so does virtue evermore "rejoice with trembling."

Being tempted ourselves, we are taught also lessons of forbearance and charity for others. What a winter would settle on our hearts, did we not feel, as we looked on the offender, that he was a brother sinner, and that we all stand in the same condemnation. Now, we feel commiseration; a tear trickles down the cheek, our sympathies are enlisted, and our aid is pledged; for we consider that *we* also have been, and may soon again be, tempted in like manner. He who thus contemplates his race will never pass by the fallen, but pity them, and pour oil and wine into their wounds.

But the signal benefit of temptation is, that it imparts moral power,—strengthens principle, and forms character. It is the conflict with ignorance and error which imparts vigor to the intellect. It is grappling with difficulties that renders one skilled in any vocation. All history teaches, that, from the highest departments of human effort,—whether in the works of art, in the control of nations or armies, or on the fields of science,—down to the humblest manual service, power is acquired, and is maintained, only by contending against obstacles.

The moral man forms no exception to this principle. The gold is here refined and purified only by fire. He who has passed no spiritual ordeal, is a moral child. We arrive at Christian manhood only by encountering danger, by resisting evil, and van-

quishing foes. Too often we conceive that mere hurtlessness is the one thing needful. Hence he who seldom errs is supposed to be, of course, the best man. To be a Christian is to hide one's self in a sunny nook, away from wind and storm, and there dream out life in a baby innocence.

Brethren, such is not the law of our nature. It is not he who hides his talent in a napkin, — safe, unharmed though it be, — whom the Lord will bless. He is already sentenced, as an “unprofitable servant, to outer darkness.” “God,” says one, “is faithful”; and mark the consequence. It is not said that man shall be kept away from temptation, but that, “with the temptation he will also make a way of escape.” Escape, that is our watchword. Better is it to have met a strong temptation, and delivered ourselves, even though with a slight stain on our garment, than to have shut ourselves up in a castle, and mouldered in a barren harmlessness.

Do I go beyond reason in thus saying? Scripture is the essence of rationality, and what is its decision on this point? On whom did Christ build that Church, against which “the gates of hell shall not prevail”? Was it upon Andrew, Philip, James the son of Alpheus, Matthew, or Jude? No; and yet of these little harm is recorded in the Gospels? Was it upon Nathaniel, that “Israelite in whom there was no guile”? No. Was it on the loving and beloved John? No. This high honor, this sacred pre-eminence, was given to that very disciple who was rebuked by his Master for repeated and aggravated

faults ; who would have called down fire on Samaria ; who would have kept Christ back from laying down his life for man ; who burned to be greatest in the temporal kingdom of his Lord ; and who, finally, thrice denied that he knew him. And why was Peter thus distinguished ? Because, having been tempted more than any others, he resisted more ; sometimes indeed falling, yet always to rise again, — to rise with deep penitence ; and to go forward, and preach, and suffer, and at length die for his Master.

And what was the lot of our honored Redeemer himself, while in the flesh ? Not one of mere innocence, of a negative character ; not one, either, shielded from all perils. He was tempted ; and that not once only, or in a few respects, but tempted in all points, like us. His ministry commenced with temptation. Hunger and want, pride, fame, and power, leagued themselves in the wilderness against him. In the midst of his labors, he was tempted by a crown ; and as his life began, so it closed. “ Father, if it be possible,” said the meek and tried One, if I may be saved these tortures, “ let this cup pass from me.” Thus did he “ learn obedience, and was made perfect.”

Who then shall denounce temptation as an un-mixed evil ? It becomes evil, only when man turns it into evil. How, then, shall we meet it ? To escape its evil, and to extract good from it, these things are essential : —

First, we must watch, and prepare for its approach. Habit inures us to temptation, and hardens us

against the sense of guilt. Prospection alone can keep us sensible of the perils of wrong habits. Opportunity only may be wanting to plunge us at any time into sin. It is fearful to think how much of our innocence must be ascribed to the simple circumstance that we have not had the occasions of other men to do wrong. Let us put our character on a better foundation. Let us garrison the heart, the tongue, and the life, and be prepared for the worst. As we look up the mountain before us, it seems begirt with ice, and the way all craggy ; but there is a path which will lead us in safety, even to its very pinnacle ; and once there, kingdoms will indeed lie at our feet. Let us seek and know and keep that path.

Self-possession at the moment of temptation must be a part of our armor. We must see, at the very point of peril, our exact position. Do some jest at your good word or deed, "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Has sin retouched and varnished its old picture, pierce the daub, and see its deformity. Be always conscious of your true situation, and you can always discover a way of escape.

Examine yourself after temptation. Having beaten to and fro through the storm of the night, now that morning dawns, take an observation. What are your moral latitude and longitude ? Did you watch aright ? Were you calm and self-controlled at the time of temptation ? Is there no point in which you can amend for the future ?

At all times pray. Consider that your strength

lies in God. When hosts encamp around us, it is the angel of the Lord alone who can deliver us. We are sometimes driven from a burning wreck ; and prayer is the single plank that can save us. Keep fast hold of God ; and then when the snare is spread, he will make for you a way of escape. Resist temptation, and its power shall daily abate. Evil foreseen and prayed against will be evil no longer. It will awaken in you a new and ever-growing power ; and in all straits throughout life, and even beyond death, you shall find that “ To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance.”

XV.

CHRIST IN THE HEART.

IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS ; AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM. — John xiv. 23.

THIS passage is but one among a multitude which illustrate the peculiarity of the Gospel of John. The Christian Fathers affirmed that the first three Evangelists treat of the humanity of Christ, but the last of his divinity. This is true ; and what is it which gives this book its Divine air and tone ? Why, when we read it, do we feel ourselves lifted into a region of unaccustomed purity ? It is because we have in it an appeal, not only to the highest spiritual experiences, but also to the deepest affections of the heart. Revealing as it does the inmost life of our Saviour, it has been well called “ The Breast of Christ.” And to whom should we go for these interior disclosures but to “ that disciple whom Jesus loved ” ? To learn his outward history, we may read the other Evangelists ; but to be led into the secret chambers of his spirit we must go to his bosom friend. For a revelation of Jesus in his special relation to ourselves, and to comprehend the height and the depth of his love,

we must ponder upon, and drink in, and become saturated with the Divine teachings of John.

This Evangelist furnishes what we most need, — a Christ for the heart. It is essential to have a firm historical basis for our faith. The attempt is vain to invalidate the record of the New Testament, and think still to retain the Saviour of man. It is to attempt building a superstructure without laying a previous foundation. But, while the historical incidents of the Gospel are essential, they are not all we need ; they do not fill and satisfy the soul.

We want, again, a Christ for the intellect. If we have one who passes before us only as a myth, or as an impenetrable mystery alone, or one whose attributes conflict with our reason, he is not adequate to our spiritual exigencies. But while we need a Christ who is a form and not a mere shadow, rational and not self-conflicting, we require still more an object for our affections. We want a Christ to love ; the heart must teach the head. Just as the little child first pours out its affections on its mother, and through the heart the understanding is enlightened, and he comes to comprehend the character of his mother and to feel the obligations of filial piety, so, in like manner, moved by the instincts of our immortal nature, we crave a Saviour on whom we can place our hearts ; the more deeply we love him, the better shall we comprehend his high qualities.

But the Christian world for long ages have pursued the opposite course. They have often sought, first and last, a Christ for the intellect. This error com-

menced with the apostles themselves. Philip, instead of opening his bosom to the all-loving and inflowing Jesus, looked to him for a sign from heaven. "Show us the Father," said the stubborn intellect. Judas, not content with the daily outgushing love of his Master, inquires sceptically, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?" And Thomas must see, touch, and handle his Lord before he will believe he is indeed risen.

And soon afterwards sprang up those conceits of "philosophy" spoken of by Paul,—Platonist, Gnostic, Ebionite, and others,—contending fiercely, these for one speculative view of Christ, and those for another, and all lost in "fables and endless genealogies." So it has been in all ages; "some," as a quaint but truthful old writer has said, "wear Christ on their heads," making, that is, a proud show of their metaphysical acumen in regard to him; "some carry him on their shoulders as if he were a burden, torturing the unsettled intellect; and some by their impious speculations trample him under their feet; but the true Christian takes him to his heart."

This I believe is what we are now especially called to do. The world is weary of the old attempts to explain Christ to the curious mind,—to imprison him within formularies and creeds. We have discovered that, after all our definings and expositions, let them result as they may, we do very little toward bringing him near to our own bosoms and accepting him as a personal Redeemer. The great error on all sides, Unitarian as well as Trinitarian, has consisted

in mistaken efforts to circumscribe the Lord Jesus, — to measure in him that “Spirit” which we are expressly told was given him “without measure,” to determine that in regard to him which by its very nature is indeterminate. Now the busy understanding has ascended into heaven, and thought to bring Christ down from his throne as Almighty God; and now it has descended into the deep, to bring him up from our own lower and common nature. But the main aspect in which the Bible presents him to us shows the futility of all such attempts. If he was to be a subject primarily of speculation, why is the field of controversy left open before us? Why did not John or Peter, instead of calling him “the Son of God,” or “the Son of Man,” as they explicitly did, say, “thou art God,” or “thou art only a man,” or “thou art a pre-existent angel”? That would have satisfied the intellect and set all questions about his nature forever at rest.

But no, the Christ they reveal is primarily described in such a way as to awaken our love. Look at his winning and lovely traits! He feeds the famishing by a miracle, while his own wants are neglected; he gives sight to the blind, restores the only son of a widow, comforts the broken-hearted, raises a brother to his beloved sisters; and his whole life overflows with acts that attract and bind us to him. And having loved his own to the end, in those last tender hours, with prayers and tears he bids them not be troubled, and assures them, that, though he must leave them for a season and lay down his life on the

cross to bring them to the Father, yet he will break the bars of the tomb and return to earth, and ascend to heaven, and shed the holy and loving Spirit forever upon them. Truly this is a being we may and must at once fold to our hearts. Alas for us, if we stand before him only to freeze ourselves in speculations on his deity or his humanity!

Then, again, theories do not and cannot nourish our immortal part; to rest in them is to feed on the wind. The only true and satisfying theory of Christ is that which springs, not out of the cold intellect, but from the wants of our inner being; which does not descend from the head, but rises from the heart, — rises spontaneously, as the morning dew goes up at the genial bidding of the sun.

Among the benefits of receiving Christ thus inwardly, is this: that it makes one a practical disciple. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." So it is always; nothing so prompts us to regard the wishes of another, and to do what we think will please him, as his having a place in our hearts. We may extol the high rank, and admire the honor and power of another, and yet care not at all to do what he shall desire. But when we truly love him, drawn to him by his gentleness, purity, self-oblivion, and kindness, then we feel inspired to do like him and to be like him. Why has there been so little practical goodness among the avowed followers of Christ; so very little, compared with our glorious standard? Because we have lacked a true love for Christ. He is everywhere respected, everywhere praised, — indeed,

often worshipped. There are enough who cry, "Lord, Lord"; many point admiringly to the bright "aureola" around his head; but small is the company who give him their full trust. Enough there are who elevate him to a distant and mysterious position, and there leave him in cold neglect; or, if they strive occasionally to honor him, it is only with extravagant, fevered, unnatural and exhausting emotions. But a true, abiding, healthy love, one which not only produces bud and blossom, but ripens on, till it bears much fruit, how few of us exhibit!

With a Christ of the intellect alone, we shall never come to keep his commandments. It is not metaphysical distinctions, nor the logical analysis of the schools, that will give us a true Christology. Important as it is to have the right opinion of Christ, that alone will never conform us to his likeness. To be true Christians, loving our whole race, caring and toiling for the oppressed, the poor, the suffering, the neglected and perishing, we must see into his very soul, appreciate his inexhaustible self-oblivion, penetrate his vast beneficence, sympathize with him in all things, — in a word, we must love him simply and solely for his interior goodness.

We live in a world of temptation and sin, and what can a merely speculative Christ do for us here? We may master all the controversies in regard to his nature, and believe with this church or that, and still be selfish, worldly-minded, of the earth, earthy. But let us once stand where John stood, see that vision of Divine loveliness, and take it home to our

hearts,—let us once behold him as he beamed on the writer to the Hebrews, “One in all points tempted like as we are,” and shedding tear for tear in our troubles,—then we are drawn to him; then we are armed with new power, able to resist evil, to overcome the world, and to pass through the hot flames of allurements, with no scorch on our garments.

A Christ lodged in the head, and not taken home to the heart, will account for a multitude of our transgressions. Why, for example, do even professed Christians so lack the spirit of forgiveness? Because, blinded by the old dogma of an atonement, which, by an inexorable justice, annihilates mercy, they cannot see the breadth of his love shining through his whole life, as well as radiating from his cross. Dismiss for the time all theories, and enter heartily into that sacred petition, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do,”—and then, as never before, you will feel prompted to pardon your own bitterest foe. Standing by the cross, you cannot hurl back the carnal weapon, but are constrained to relent and to forgive,—forgive, as you hope and pray to be yourself forgiven.

When shall we so look upon, so love and follow, our dear Master?

“World Redeemer, Lord of glory! as of old to zealous Paul,
Thou didst come in sudden splendor, and from out the cloud didst
call;
As to Mary, in the garden, did thy risen form appear,—
Come, arrayed in heavenly beauty,—come, and speak, and I will hear.

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In my heart a voice made answer, 'Ask not for a sign from heaven;
In the Gospel of thy Saviour, Love as well as Light is given;
Ever looking unto Jesus, all his glory shalt thou see;
From thy heart the veil be taken, and the Word made clear to thee.'

Yes, with the love of Christ in our hearts, we shall see him in our daily walk, receive from him a holy impulse and be strengthened in all faith and duty.

Mark also the efficacy of love to Christ in uniting us to God. "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him." The craving of the soul in all ages has been, that it may know the Divinity. Who is he? what are his attributes? and, especially, how does he regard us? With prayers and supplications and tears, we ask light on this dark theme.

It was to man, standing in this imploring attitude, that Jesus Christ was sent. In him, "the Word," — that Word by which heaven and earth were created, and by which light shone forth, refulgent through nature and Providence, — in him "the Word was made flesh." And now the world saw, flashing from the east unto the west, that glorious truth, "God is Love."

God, it was manifest, so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son to seek and to save the lost. God is our Father; and to testify his deep, inextinguishable affection for his offspring, he commissions one specially to announce to them a way of redemption from ignorance, error, sin, and death.

But it was not sufficient to teach the world intellectually in relation to God and man. The race had

been instructed again and again, by seer and sage, on this point. As Paul says, "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world were clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." But that was not enough ; "the cold, intellectual Deity of natural religion," as another well says, "did not suffice. The world wanted, not the distant majesty, the bleak immensity, the mechanical omnipotence, the immutable stillness of the speculative theorist's God, but one nearer to our worn and wearied hearts."

And such was Jesus, our Redeemer ; he came not so much to *tell* us of God, how great or how good he is, as to exhibit in himself the brightness of God's glory and an express image of his person. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," — that is the key to the golden treasure, unlocking the soul's imperishable wealth. Love this Divine being, and the Father, your Father and his Father, as Christ promised, will recognize and respond everlastingly to that affection.

To lift us up to the Father, and assure us of his gracious regard, we needed a mediator and an advocate. God was not alienated from man, or unwilling, for any reason, to receive him ; still man felt himself unworthy to approach that high and august Being, and pleaded for some one who would stand between him and God, and speak in his behalf, and announce, assure, and illustrate the Divine mercy. Wandering from his Father, and stumbling on the dark mountain of sin and sorrow, he besought a friendly hand to lead him back to his divine home,

back to the great Fountain of light and love, and this is the very office of Christ. He is an incarnation of the Infinite tenderness and compassion, — a being precious to us, not so much for the abstract truth he taught, as for the unapproached power he possesses to win our deep heart, to enlist our affections, and bind us, with the triple cord of Father, Son, and Spirit, to himself.

“If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him.”

Faithfully is this promise fulfilled. When Jesus is truly enthroned in our affections, all divine influences, we find, flow down upon us. Having the Son near us and in us, we have also the Father present, not, indeed, miraculously, but present to faith, and seen by the spirit. The best beloved of God, his brightest and loveliest manifestation to mortals, he who was in the bosom of the Father, even while on earth, is now with us. “The seed of Abraham,” to sympathize with us in our temptations and deliver us without sin; “the man of sorrows,” to taste with us each bitter cup, and, when dear ones are taken from our bosom, to share our burden; “the Son of God,” showing us in his own person the Father, and shedding on us the Holy Spirit to awaken us to faith, repentance, and an interior and full regeneration; “The Son of man,” his arm within ours, in all dark and slippery places, to guide and uphold us, — is not this indeed an all-sufficient Saviour?

Nor is the blessing given for a day only. “We will make our abode with him.” Love Christ, and he will

love you, and the Father will love you, and they will come unto you, and give you their permanent society, their unfailing friendship, their enduring fidelity. Others may change, —

“ Old friends burn dim, like lamps in noisome air,” —

but these will remain true. The dearest of earth's ties must at last be dissolved ; but our union with the Father and the Son shall never be broken, never interrupted. That last event, which will quench earth's light and part us all, — parent and child, husband and wife, brothers and sisters, — will not separate us from Christ. O no ! it will bring us still nearer to that exalted Being ; it will elevate our love for him ; it will melt away the dross of our earthliness, and blend our refined and purified spirits with his. Look upon Jesus, ponder the path he trod, fill yourself with his temper, and soon the Father will shine upon you in his matchless effulgence ; the blessed Comforter will draw you more and more to your Redeemer ; and you will at last be conformed to and wear forever that likeness long contemplated with faith, earnestness, and prayer.

XVI.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE.

SURELY THE LORD IS IN THIS PLACE, AND I KNEW IT NOT.—
Gen. xxviii. 16.

WE live in a period of unprecedented activity, not only in the material, but also in the mental world. At no time has science made so rapid progress ; and no age has been so replete with discoveries and inventions as the present. Indeed, whole fields of science,—such as meteorology, photography, and electro-magnetism,—have recently been entered, whose existence, in their present forms, was not suspected at the beginning of this century. To the philosopher it is a day of rich satisfactions, and to the man of affairs also. To all, indeed, who are concerned in the application of science to the arts of life and to its comforts, there has never been a period of such passing interest and so bright hopes.

How does this extraordinary progress of the sciences affect the truths of religion ? What is the aspect of this feature of the age to the Christian ? Is its legitimate tendency toward infidelity and Atheism ? Or does it in any way serve to strengthen our religious belief ?

We cannot deny that some eminent natural philosophers in times past were unbelievers; and in our own age, some of this class have appeared sceptical or indifferent in regard to religion. It is easy, too, to denounce such men as Humboldt, who has been called "an assassin of souls." But, in a broad and fair view, I believe the tendencies of science are all in the opposite direction. Professor Agassiz, who pronounced a eulogy on the illustrious man just named, — himself a successor without rival to the commanding position he held, — is, you well know from his writings, a devout man, regarding the material universe as the direct product of "the thoughts of God." Being recently asked why so many of the foreign naturalists failed to pay a tribute to religion, he replied, "They are so absorbed in their scientific investigations, that they exhaust themselves before they reach that point which connects science and religion."

This, and not the inherent contrariety of the two, explains, I think, most of the apparent unbelief in question. The more we know of creation, the more fruitful are its materials for faith, and the clearer are our perceptions of the handiwork of God.

Once it was thought man's duty to believe in a Supreme Being simply because it is taught in the Bible. You must begin, continue, and close your search for evidence of that truth in this book alone. Philosophy was then repudiated as an enemy to Christianity; and revelation was thought to be exalted by the disparagement, not to say the contempt,

of natural religion. Not a few still cling to this idea ; they think learning unfriendly to faith and piety. Multitudes, too, in all ages, not excepting the present, have looked to what are termed the events of a special Providence for the great proof of the existence of God. They have imagined we can find his footprints in the history of our race, and, perhaps, in our personal experience occasionally ; but they expected no strong light on this subject from science. There has been a secret fear, on the contrary, that too much knowledge would tend only to unsettle one's religious belief.

Now I regard all such apprehensions as essentially unfounded. The chief danger in this quarter does not spring from profound investigation and a broad learning ; it is " a little knowledge," which here, as in many other cases, " is the dangerous thing." A few years since, a volume was published, entitled " Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," in which the agency of God was excluded from this globe, and its powers and productions were all ascribed to what is termed a law of " Development." But sufficient time has already elapsed to show the unsoundness of that work. Nor has its position been essentially reinforced by a more recent production on " The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection." Accurate research, instead of supplanting the Deity, is every day revealing him all around us. True science does not drown the voice of the Lord ; it does not array itself against the Scriptures ; it serves, on the contrary, to confirm their truth. Neither does it

conflict with the testimony of Providence. So far from it, the great current of experience, both social and individual, flows in the same broad channel with it. Every whisper of the human soul which speaks of God and of his love and care for man, seems raised to an articulate voice and reverberated through her myriad works, by nature. Instead of laying on our faith the chill hand of doubt and death, she appears commissioned, in these latter days, to touch every object around us only to make it live, and stand up a new witness to the omnipresent wisdom and goodness of our Divine Father.

The pious Hebrew of old ascribed all the operations of the visible world directly to God. Not content with making him the Creator of all things, he regarded him as having always carried forward his material workmanship, and as at every moment nigh at hand and putting forth his power. This is the doctrine of the new, as it was of the elder covenant. Our Lord and Saviour affirms that the very "hairs of our head are numbered" in the sight of the Father, and "not even a sparrow falls to the ground without" him. This has been the sentiment of the devout in all succeeding ages.

But, now, is this anything more than a sentiment? Is it not a mere feeling, evanescent, illusory, unworthy of any deep confidence? Is there any basis of truth, apparent and demonstrable, on which we can stand and utter this language of Christ?

It is the glory of modern physical science to be giving us more and more certainty on this point.

Look at her achievements in whatever quarter you may, and you can see traces of the Divinity. For example, celestial mechanics have proudly weighed this globe, and revealed to us its threefold motion. Geodesy has measured its inaccessible heights and distances, and triangulated from mountain to mountain across its valleys. Geology has penetrated beneath its surface, and read to us the record of the earth's history, written in the "stone-book" of its successive stratifications. Mineralogy, chemistry, electricity, magnetism, natural history, and physiology have displayed to us the forces, organized and unorganized, through which the destinies of this world and its occupants, age upon age, have been shaped. But still, the profoundest natural philosophers, so long as they have kept to their own proper realm, and not obtruded metaphysical arguments into the domain which belongs exclusively to physics, have come at last to a point where they have been constrained to recognize the immediate power and agency of God.

True science aids religion by taking off from our minds, as it does, the dread sense of necessity, and disclosing an intelligent Will presiding over the material universe. It relieves us of the feeling that springs from the intense contemplation of the "laws of nature," an iron machinery, as they sometimes seem, which moves inexorably on, the same terrible, relentless power to all ages and all individuals. It shows us that, whatever we may judge of the operation of these laws, they could not have established

themselves. All law implies a lawmaker ; who then framed the laws of nature ? The keen eye of modern research has detected no energy in nature herself sufficient to make her own laws. She calls upon religion to solve this problem ;— she confesses it must have been God who created the heavens and the earth.

Nor does she rest here ; natural philosophy teaches, furthermore, that if law cannot make, neither can it administer and execute itself. The same Being who originated must still uphold the material universe ; He who gave these worlds their first impulse must still propel them from moment to moment. Ascribe whatever energy we will to the forces of nature, so long as we explain their modes and means by the law of cause and effect, we cannot stop short of tracing them to an Almighty Being. All motion whatever proceeds, we find, from spirit ; matter cannot move itself ; it waits the bidding of intelligence. My arm cannot raise itself ; it rises only at the call of my mind ; — and if no one part or particle of matter has the power of self-motion, neither can the whole have it collectively. There must be a mighty Will constantly at work in every portion of the outward universe, or it would be at once and forever at a stand.

And not only do these exhibitions of power, but still more those of a matchless wisdom, which we more and more detect in nature, necessitate the truth of religion. The pursuit of science is bringing to light ever new instances of the marvellous

adaptations of nature. Look, for example, at physical geography, and you see in the distribution of animals each class suited to its own latitude, and finding there its appropriate food. Nor is that all ; they give evidence in many instances of several independent acts of creation in various portions of the globe. Man is so organized as to live in every zone ; but that animal, in which is seen an imperfect bodily resemblance to man, lives only in one climate. Man, therefore, is the lord of all latitudes ; his physical frame, taken alone, suffices to reveal in this aspect the wisdom of his Creator.

This age, through its perfecting of instruments and accuracy of calculations and delicate observations, has made great progress in the science of astronomy. Height and depth have unbarred their sacred marvels at its bidding ; new provinces, pointing to innumerable others behind them, have expanded in the kingdom of the infinite. Within sixty years no less than fifty-eight asteroids have been discovered ; to the list of primaries of our system have been recently added sixty-seven, and to the secondaries twenty-one, being three times the whole number known to exist fifteen years ago. More planets have been discovered in the solar system within the last twenty years than all which were known to Sir Isaac Newton, and nearly twice as many, — including too the late magnificent discovery by Leverrier, — as had been added to the catalogue for the two thousand preceding years.

As we thus press into region beyond region of

space, we see the infinite greatness of God. Contemplating the to us ever-enlarging panorama of the stellar universe, by an argument cumulative as we advance, each newly welcomed inhabitant brings an added testimony to our religious faith. Every new star utters a fresh voice in the mighty concert. From the long and shining train,—moon, asteroid, planet, and comet,—wide and still wider rings the heavenly chorus: “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!” What the patriarch saw only in a special vision, we are seeing night upon night, a ladder set upon the earth,—its top reaching we cannot tell where,—and angels ascending and descending upon it, proclaiming the presence and the glory of God.

Turn we again to the science of Geology, almost literally a new science, how much has that done for the cause of religion. At first it was thought to militate with the Scriptures; but now they are seen perfectly to harmonize. As in the book of Genesis, so by investigation of the globe itself, we have testimony to successive acts of creative power. And in the order of these creations we find irresistible evidence of an omniscient propection. The waters are first inhabited; then vegetation appears; and when food has thus been prepared for them, animals are created; and finally, after thousands of years, when all things are ready, the most perfect being of the whole is fashioned, and dominion is given him over all that preceded or coexist with himself. If “an undevout astronomer is mad,” so

must be an undevout geologist. He, we should say, of all men, cannot fail to see that Hand which shut up the sea with doors, and set bars and bounds it should not pass. To him the volcano and earthquake must testify of that Being, who "looketh on the earth and it trembleth, who toucheth the hills and they smoke."

Modern science is friendly to religion by disclosing the simplicity of nature. This simplicity is most striking when we look at the grandeur of its results, compared with its apparent means. Man, to construct a powerful engine, must resort to a multiplicity of springs and wheels; the greater the power, the more complex must be the work. Not so with the processes of nature; her mightiest operations are carried forward by a very few agencies. The Almighty, by the simple and direct exercise of his will, bindeth "the sweet influences of Pleiades," and looseth "the bands of Orion." As race after race have perished, he has sent forth his Spirit, and new ones have been created. By a divine chemistry, he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man. He mustereth the dark forces of the skies, and then he sendeth his lightning, leaping like a thing of life, from cloud to cloud and to the ends of the earth. By the breath of God frost is given, and he lays an unspotted and princely robe on the bleak ground. "Fair weather,"—the flashing and many-tinted aurora,— "cometh out of the north; with God is terrible majesty." Thus did Hebrew poet and prophet feel themselves God-inclosed, God-filled, God-breathing men.

This sublime consciousness a cold, and I must think a superficial, science in the past age had in a great measure extinguished. But now a higher and truer philosophy is bringing God back, — bringing back the sun to the earth, by bringing back sight to the blind. Stand where you will, and with an open eye look where you may, observation and reason now confirm the testimony of revelation: "Surely the Lord is in this place."

To all this we may finally add an argument drawn from the exercise and expansion of the mind itself in the developments of modern science. The great students of natural history, starting from opposite points, with various tendencies, some by a keen inspection of facts, and others by assumptions and broad generalizations, are coming to a close agreement in their results and conclusions. It is a cheering fact, that the metaphysical German, — occupying, as he now does, the front rank of scientific investigation, — is also awaking to new interest in the realm of religion. And, in regard to the relations of all animated beings, the profoundest minds in every country are discovering the one great plan of the Creative Mind. And thus, again, do we reach the grand certainty that there is an affinity, and in many points an identity, in the operations of the human and the Divine intellects. And now man, so small a creature, an atom in a boundless universe, having weighed the stars in a balance and unrolled the vast chart of geological history, soars beyond and above space and time,

and rises legitimately to a kindred fellowship with the august and eternal One.

So does science unite with our Saviour in seeing God in the lowly grass-blade and the modest lily ; and thus does mental culture respond to the attestation of Christ, that there is "a kingdom of God within" us. In the great cycle of the ages, man first indulges a blind belief, erring and unsafe ; then he proudly questions, and becomes sceptical, perhaps unbelieving ; but when the end is come, his mind being cultivated to its full tension, in an age of true science, he reaches a compact and solid faith. And thus, at last, all nature, mental as well as material, becomes a circular mirror, reflecting on all sides the image of Him whose features are written legibly both in the outward frame and in the interior, spirit-structure of his rational offspring.

Are these things so, we owe a tribute of acknowledgment to Him who, as he raises up kingly intellects to extend for us the realms of natural science, shows his paternal regard for our temporal well-being. Accepting his gracious beneficence, it is right that we employ these gifts for the enhancement of our material prosperity. It is right that, through the new power furnished to the mechanic arts, we use each freshly discovered agency of nature to augment our wealth. But let not this be all ; we are summoned to look from nature up to nature's God. To him be the praise for his helping hand. And let us not forget that it is, — science bearing witness with the Bible, — it is his very hand, which, through

means and channels, gives riches to the prospered, a competency for our wants, strength to earn bread, and his smile to crown the whole.

Mortal, immortal man, go where you may, rest under what roof you choose, remember, the Lord is in that place. In the multitude of your cares and toils, his gentle arm holds you up from earliest dawn to latest eve. As you lie on your pillow, that un-sleeping eye is upon you. Be a loving and obedient child, and God will regard you with an unutterable benignity. And how delightful is the thought, that He who framed all worlds, and presides over the stupendous universe, vouchsafes to us his presence, his protection, and his love. Be pure in heart, and you will more and more see that benignant countenance. And then every scene of life will be to you touched by a Divine pencil ; and every spot of earth will be a Bethel. You will not need, like the patriarch, to set up here or there a stone for a pillar to God ; you will erect an all-observing and everlasting memorial unto him, — not on the perishable earth, but in your inmost and immortal heart.

XVII.

THE TEN RIGHTEOUS MEN.

AND THE LORD SAID, IF I FIND IN SODOM FIFTY RIGHTEOUS WITHIN THE CITY, THEN I WILL SPARE ALL THE PLACE FOR THEIR SAKES. . . . I WILL NOT DESTROY IT FOR TEN'S SAKE. — Gen. xviii. 26, 32.

THE great truth that character is the moral lever of this world and that righteous men are the salvation of the earth, — this is the subject we are now to consider. No one can read a page of Scripture without perceiving that it was to produce righteous men that prophets and apostles and the Son of God lived and labored and died. Of a merely outward prosperity the New Testament certainly makes no account; and those distinctions and titles to which the earthly mind so ardently aspires pass with Christianity for naught. It regards man solely as a moral and spiritual being. He who has not unfolded his nature in this respect is represented as having failed of the very purpose of his existence, and therefore as an object of the Divine displeasure; while the righteous man is said to be a favorite of God. Such are the true sovereigns of the earth; let their outward condition be what it may, they exert a more than regal influence.

It is for the production of righteousness that the events of Providence are all manifestly disposed. God governs this world with a strict regard to the individual man. The animals are dealt with as a multitude; millions of them we see sacrificed to universal laws. It is not so with the human race, regarded in their distinctive character, that is, as moral beings. If God, in the Scriptures, treats each soul as single and separate in its discipline and its responsibilities, so does he in this our present and passing world. Let a young man set before himself personal righteousness, a good character, moral and religious, as the great object for which he will labor and live, and all things will work together to accomplish that object. Let him,—outwardly speaking,—thrive or fail, his soul shall always prosper; let him be honored or in obscurity, his moral glory shall be ever promoted. Through sickness and through health, amid bounty and bereavement, as a spiritual being, he shall rise and triumph; and death itself to him shall be, not death, but the entrance on a new life, a life matchless and interminable.

We are hardly aware of the power and influence of personal character. How often are the destinies of nations and ages decided by single individuals. The history of the human race is written largely in letters of blood. War has been a chief occupation in most periods, civilized as well as savage. It has been pronounced, indeed, by an eminent writer, the natural state of man. But what has been the most fruitful occasion of wars? By far the larger part of

them have sprung from the personal instigations of kings, emperors, popes, or military chieftains.

But who, — to illustrate our special topic, — among all these have exerted the widest and the most permanent influence? Where they have been vicious men their sway has usually been limited or temporary. Look at the Tamerlanes, the Attilas, and the Alarics of the past. They were men in many instances of great intellectual ability; some of them were the friends and promoters of a worldly prosperity. Yet what, — in the lapse of ages and the ultimate well-being of our race, — is the influence they do and will exert? It will diminish just so fast as the human race advances. In the ever-diffusive light of the Gospel they will all, — from Nero down to Napoleon, — be held up and characterized as moral monsters, as liberticides, as mighty hunters of mankind. There *are* military heroes in history who will live and shine on forever; but who are they? Always “righteous men,” such as Alfred, Bayard, Sidney, and Washington; these are the men who save cities, communities, and the world. We are now looking with intense interest on the fortunes of long-distracted Italy. Star after star has risen on our view, kindling the fair hope that at length not one shall fail to blend in the glorious constellation of her reunited future. And on what does that hope primarily rest? On a single man; that man who, drinking an inspiration fresh from Heaven, believes himself the destined deliverer of his oppressed country. So long as that noble life is spared, it will stir

the hearts of millions of Italians, and through his and their adamant faith,—quickenened by the long series of his past brilliant successes,—the strong right arm of a righteous cause will be a pledge of ultimate victory.

The establishment of the various denominations and sects of Christendom has been effected mainly by the personal influence of individual men. Luther, Penn, Wesley, Swedenborg,—what hosts of believers rise before the mind at the mention of such names as these! A talismanic power comes over us as we read their writings; and how largely did their living discourses depend, for their estimate, on the personal weight of the preacher. Go into some remote village and inquire the condition of any one of its religious societies. It is perhaps feeble and failing; and why? The presumption is, because there is no one man who takes a special interest in its welfare. Another society by its side prospers,—the outward circumstances of the two being in other respects equal,—because some few, perhaps some one of its members, enter heart and soul into all its fortunes. We contemplate founding a Theological Seminary. Will it succeed, or will it fail? Tell us who will preside over it; whether there is some good, true, and able man who will identify himself with it, and we will decide on the instant whether it will prosper.

We might illustrate this principle by innumerable examples drawn from secular life. Governments depend much for their purity and permanence on the private character of their magistrates. The college

with a good mind at its head will thrive. So with every institution for professional or literary instruction. The common school depends on its teacher. Massachusetts has a Board of Education which blesses and gladdens our wide commonwealth ; and that pre-eminently because in the beginning there was one powerful, all-controlling mind, who for years was its centre and soul. How many houses and families of the Old World owe their undying renown to the individual character of some single member. One illustrious Cæsar, one accomplished heir of the Medicis, one Charlemagne, has spread a glory over ages of his family.

The prevalence of the two great dispensations of God to man may be traced largely to this same personal influence. Whence came the Hebrew religion ? It was derived, indeed, from Jehovah ; yet it received its impress and its impulse from the character of a single individual. Without Moses, his peculiar wisdom, his steadfast piety, and his dauntless zeal, we should not have had the Jewish religion as we now have it. And our own holy faith owed its establishment and its prevalence to the godlike character of "the man Christ Jesus." Not only did his mission receive the attestation of miracle, but its triumphs were linked inseparably with the personal qualities of the messenger. We might perhaps have had the truths of Christianity conveyed to us by angelic voices ; but its spirit and its world-saving power we owe all to the individual influence of our Saviour. His unapproached devoutness, his divine forbearance

and forgiveness, his universal and inexhaustible love, the toils and privations and sacrifices of his life, and, most signally of all, his meek, all-crowning death, — without these the mere abstract doctrines and precepts he inculcated could never have taken hold of the heart of humanity. With these the word runs, has “free course,” and is “glorified.”

Among the apostles, it is remarkable what an influence we can trace to those particular traits which marked them as individuals. In Peter we see an ardor of temperament and an energy which qualify him to be a leader in the Church, a “rock,” on which its everlasting foundations should be laid. John is the incarnation of love; his sweet spirit breathed forth a Gospel which knits us in dear fellowship, and is our solace in every gloom. What was needed to carry forth this redeeming faith and win it a place among the subtle and the sensual Gentiles? The personal power of a man like Paul; a logician, who could argue with and convince the scholars of Athens, and who, through the intellect, could reach, and, under God, regenerate the heart; a bold man, who dared assail the dazzling and shameless vices of the voluptuous Corinth and Ephesus and Rome; an eloquent man, whose burning words could pierce their mail-clad conscience and convert them to Christ; and, — topstone of the noble edifice, — a “righteous man,” one whose quenchless love and martyr zeal were the sign-manual of his sacred mission.

But let it not be thought that the influence I

describe is confined to men in conspicuous stations or of rare abilities. We are apt to imagine that our own sphere is small, and that hence we can do little to affect the character and destiny of others. "Had we distinguished talents, or did we occupy a prominent position in society, or had we the wealth of some at our command, then our influence would be great. But we have none of these things. Our abilities are moderate, we have merely a competent property, and we hold no office or rank among others ; how, then, can we have any influence in the world ? "

The state of mind betrayed in these remarks shows an ignorance of the true sources and springs of influence. It were vain to deny that wealth has a sway, especially in this country where birth and titles are comparatively insignificant. Sometimes it confers power on those whose characters are grossly defective. Still, in the long run, and even here, moral worth is more influential than mere property. Let a man be notoriously dishonest or marked as a miser, and riches will not raise him to honors or command for him respect. So of intellectual power and attainments. These are potent, it is true ; yet they have little permanent influence when associated with flagrant vices. Who would intrust a case to an advocate whom he believed thoroughly unprincipled ? Would the mere fact of one's possessing uncommon legal abilities lead us to employ him, if we knew that he often embezzled the property placed in his hands, or that he was utterly regardless of truth and honesty ? No, we must have confidence in the moral

character of an individual, or his learning, talent, eloquence, or whatever mental accomplishments he possesses, will pass for very little in our final estimate of the man.

God has so united virtue and influence, that they are never wholly and permanently separated. There is always a tendency in moral obliquity to produce degradation and dishonor; and there is always a tendency in moral excellence to rise and gain power, and become the controlling principle on earth. We can, therefore, never say of any truly good man, that he has no influence; on the contrary, a virtue is always going out from him. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"; goodness is the leaven of this world. Silently, it may be slowly, yet with an irresistible certainty, it ferments the great mass of society. It is the helm by which this great ship, on which the nations and age are embarked, is guided through the ocean of destiny; or rather, it is the spring, small, often unobserved, yet all-powerful, which, in the hand of Providence, moves this mighty machine, wheels within wheels, the concourse of human actions, issues, and awards.

Every man exerts an influence, either for good or evil, on the character and condition of others. No one can, if he would, live wholly to himself. Every day our conversation is heard in certain circles; and our words go forth, a savor either of life unto life or of death unto death to others. In the Alps a mighty mass of snow and ice is sometimes so nicely poised on the brink of a precipice, that a single loud word,

it is said, will change its balance and cause the whole to topple and fall. So do we, by a word only, or by a slight action, sometimes do that which affects the well-being of a bosom friend, of our kindred, our town, our country. We aid in forming a public opinion ; we throw an ingredient into the mass of the community ; we decide to some extent the moral tone of the young with whom we mingle. Among our associates in business, our companions in recreation, everywhere and always, we are suns in our several systems, raying out a moral influence, making some individual, at least, either wiser and purer, or more thoughtless, selfish, and debased.

The New Testament records many instances of moral power in obscure life. It tells us of a certain poor widow who cast into the treasury two mites, — a small gift in that splendid temple at Jerusalem. She might have argued that, being a poor and humble person, she could do no good with the little she could give. But she did not so argue ; she did what she could ; and now portray, if you can, the effect of that one small gift on the charities, and hence on the destinies, both moral and material, of all Christendom. What illustrious examples of self-sacrifice do we often see among the needy and obscure ! The lowly roof is sometimes resplendent with an unsurpassed moral excellence. Domestic life is often fertile in good influences. Let the husband and father be a “righteous man” ; he is quiet, perhaps, in manner, his words are few ; and yet those words are always true, and that unassuming manner is the

emanation of deep Christian principles, and underneath it lies a heart rich with all noble sympathies. Such a man silently moulds the deportment and sways the character of all who dwell beneath his roof. Who can measure the influence of a faithful wife and a devoted mother? She may not wield a pen, nor preside over any seminary, nor be the head of notable associations; and perhaps she thinks that, therefore, her sphere is so small it matters little how she demeans herself. Christianity says otherwise. Her daily life is a book read by all those inmates; she presides over a God-established society; and she teaches a school in which heaven-affecting lessons are learned; and through her children, no less than personally, she sends forth a moral savor that passes out through the community and passes downward, and whose extent eternity alone will decide.

Our subject concerns finally the patriot. We feel an interest in the prosperity of our country; but what will promote it? Not outward means and appliances alone. No, let the people go on, and amass property: God prosper them in every laudable enterprise. But still, in this age of ever-growing intercommunication, when business brings multitudes into contact and into the keenest emulation with all their moral perils; in this momentous age, when the nation has opened its golden gates on the Pacific waves, what is to save and exalt this country? Will it be enough that we give wings to secular enterprise? Alas, no! all this outward advancement must have an inward counterpoise; we must labor

at the wheel of private character ; it must be sounded through the land and sink into all hearts, that it is not our territorial enlargement alone, not though each mountain teemed with gold, and all our majestic rivers flowed over the sparkling metal, it is not this, but it is our "righteous men" that can perpetuate the Republic. God send us such men ; give us personal piety, individual integrity, domestic virtue, sincere patriotism, — give us these, and the nation is safe : it shall be spared, enlarged, established, the light-house of the world and the accepted of Heaven.

And what can we do for ourselves, that will avail us in the end, if we neglect this one thing needful ? Let it be that man will confide in us for extrinsic considerations alone. God will not do it ; he holds us responsible for the secret condition of our inmost soul ; and to that point he bids us direct the highest energies of our nature. We are each a city set on a hill and pouring down streams of influence, to bless or to blight we know not how many. Join we then that noble company, who so live as to quicken and save their fellow-beings. By repentance of our past remissness toward others, by faith in a redeeming future, by persisting in love and in self-oblivion may we be everywhere known and felt as righteous men.

XVIII.

CHRIST ON THE MOUNTAINS.

JESUS BRINGETH THEM UP INTO AN HIGH MOUNTAIN
APART. — Matt. xvii. 1.

It is worthy of observation, that not a few of the prominent scenes in the life of our Saviour transpired on some mountain. On the threshold of his mighty work, when temptation would lay before him its alluring gifts, “the Devil,” — so runs the narrative, — “taketh him up into a high mountain.” That compendium of all duty to God and man left us by the Redeemer, is named from the spot where it fell from his hallowed lips, the “Sermon on the Mount.” Weary with the toils of the parched and dusty day, at night he goes up into a mountain to pray. When he is about to unfold the sublime harmony between his own religion and that of elder and God-inspired prophets, by passing, to that end, through a personal and divine transfiguration, he taketh chosen witnesses and leadeth them up into a high mountain. That costly sacrifice by which the earth drank his pure and redeeming blood, was consummated on Mount Calvary. And when the sacred drama draws to its close, he having burst the bands of death, a

cloud receives him out of mortal view on the consecrated heights of Olivet.

Nor did this dedication of the loftiest of God's earth-works date with the birth of Christianity. We find the elder Scriptures replete with similar incidents.

It was from the heaven-lighted bush of Horeb that God spake unto Moses; and from the bleak and craggy summit of Sinai was promulgated that primal code written on the mountain-stone. Abraham, when called to offer up his son, ascends the brow of Moriah. It was amid the "excellency of Carmel" that Elijah communed with Jehovah, and, surrounded by the frantic idolaters of Baal, wrought that miracle which showed the transcendent power of the only true and living God. Here, too, Elisha met and gave joy to the bereft Shunamite mother. On the splendid crown of Zion it was, "beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth," that once stood the holy temple.

But why should I repeat the story of Ebal, Gerizim, Nebo, Gilead, Pisgah, Gilboa, Lebanon, and how many other similar heights, — illustrious in sacred writ, — monuments through all ages of a God-granted presence, of a holy worship, of memorable deeds, of honored lives and saintly deaths. Every page of the inspired volume is redolent with their life-giving atmosphere.

And now, why this so frequent recurrence in the Bible of allusions and references to these elevated portions of the earth? It cannot be a mere accident.

It is not a chance occurrence that the great events of sacred import transpired so comparatively seldom in the valleys or on the plains of Palestine.

No, the mountains have been thus honored because, in the first place, they naturally lift our minds upward. As we muse on that almighty fiat which brought this globe into being, our thoughts rise from point to point, until we can with clear vision see, as we stand on the mountain-top, —

“That here, from finished earth, triumphant trod
The last ascending steps of her creating God.”

In all ages, profane no less than sacred, the hills have seemed to man the special abode of the Divinity. Here the creature meets his Creator eye to eye, and the reverent spirit may well say, “This is holy ground.”

Mountains exhibit tokens of the majesty and the power of God. It is he that with volcanic force lifts them from the great level, or “overturneth” them “by the roots.” In the sublime strains of an ancient prophet, “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran; the mountains saw him, and trembled; yea, the everlasting mountains were scattered and the perpetual hills did bow.” Through what convulsions must these mighty masses have passed! Age upon age, cycle upon cycle, has the stupendous work gone on. Once the deep ocean rolled its vast waters over these now lofty summits:

“Their sinuous, wave-like forms were cast
From a subsiding sea.”

Their congregated wonders, — “gorge, glen, cav-

ern, crevice, veiled in shadow or hidden in deeper darkness; shivered crag, rocky acclivity, wooded brow, and bold summit," — each testify to the primitive throes of nature that produced them. How they stand up in their God-imparted dignity and strength, "the pillars of heaven"! Look down those unfathomed ravines, and enter into the treasures of their snow which knows no melting. Go up, even in our sunniest days, and God is there, scattering how often the hoarfrost like ashes, casting forth his ice like morsels. And who, on those bleak and awful heights, can stand before his cold? How impressive is this silence! No beast of the forest is here; no bird even, save ever and anon the adventurous swallow: Mark the mighty sweep of the clouds; now they rise with an angel's ease, and now they descend, swift, feathery chariots; and over and around, below and above, with a master's course, their shapes and shadows play and roll and heave, from morn to noon, and on to twilight's sober hour.

Mountains demonstrate, also, the goodness of God. On their commencing declivities the husbandman often tills the rich soil, and enamels the acres with waving fields of herb and grain and the bearing fruit-tree. As his flocks and herds crop the tender grass, he may well feel that God doth "care for oxen," and that not only every beast of the forest, but the cattle also upon a thousand hills are his. There the child gathers rich berries; there the angler finds the coy fish; and there, too, the woodman fells the oak and pine wherewith to build his habitation and ward off

stern winter ; and there toils the swart lumberman ; and hence comes the mighty mast, pointing, as it braves all seas, up to the great God who caused it once to germinate and grow. And He who went before Israel, and clave the rocks in the wilderness and gave drink as out of the great depths, still vindicates his loving power by smiting the mountains and causing streams to flow from their bosoms ; the little headspring, gathering, as its overflowings trickle down, ever new tributes, until it becomes the mighty river, bearing its waters to a thousand murmuring mill-wheels, and pouring its exhaustless treasures into the fathomless, boundless deep.

Look at these fair creations, and you may learn, too, a lesson of the beauty of God. Not for a dry utility alone was the mountain reared, but to regale the ear by its water and wind music, and to charm the eye by multitudinous methods. Mark the interminable variety of the size, structure, proportions, and forms of mountains and hills. Now you will see the perfect cone, base, altitude, apex, all entire ; and now it is obtuse, or perhaps truncated with a mechanic's nicety. Here is the pyramid ; there the almost level summit ; and there again a long, wavy, undulating outline, or many needle-like peaks. He, who deigns to give the useful potato a fair blossom, does not despise the garnishing of every point and part of these grand productions. He clothes them every day in a new dress. If crowned at sunrise, as before, with costliest diamonds, there is to-day some fresh gem in the coronet, or the old jewels are

adjusted with a slight and ever-adorning variation. Yesterday the robe was of wool, as if in compassion for their nakedness and cold ; to-day it is of purest linen, cool to the very eye. Merchant, milliner, man, and maiden would all vie in vain with these Oriental clouds to array the waiting bride of day. Stand on that peak as the dawn breaks and the reddening hours steal on and over it. Mist and fog roll at your feet, a vast ocean enveloping each terrestrial thing. As the sun comes forth islands seem to rise in each hill and summit from the bosom of the deep. The tall tree towers up a grand reality, a fixed fact. Step by step whole forests are created ; low, and still lower descend the humble clouds ; or high, and yet higher it may be they rise, until they vanish into naught, and a golden flood sweeps triumphantly over the unbounded expanse.

Look abroad ; field beyond field, stream, lake, farm, village, — all is light and life. Descend from this eminence ; from the craggy rock you pass down to the rare-appearing moss, the thin grass, the stunted shrub, the incipient tree, the dense and tall forest, the open glade, the cultured acres. And how could Almighty Wisdom have surpassed the beauty of this clustered whole ? Tree, rock, stream, flower, fruit, — embellish them if you can ; invent some fairer hue ; add a new tint to that ever-varying, ever-rich panorama. The blue distant, the green present, changing seasons, the verdure of June, the myriad-tinted autumn, the spotless, celestial purity of winter, — who but must grant their transcend-

ent claims? Well may Tabor and Hermon rejoice in the name of Him who arrayed them in such supernal charms; and well may every mountain and every little hill emulate the glad and thankful strain.

And now shall man, the spectator of all this, gaze upon it as an idle pageant, and live and die like the brute that roams its forests, unconscious of its glory or presence? Nay, we cannot contemplate these mighty elevations steadily and thoughtfully without being mindful of Him who reared them in the beginning. Look thus at some grand circuit-range, and you must feel, that, as the mountains are round about the spot where you stand, so is the Lord who created them round about his children forever. Not more freely does each lofty summit lay bare its bosom to God, than you will open yours. Draw nigh to him; and, as the gracious sun gilds the rich, spirit-like clouds rolling up those steeps, so will he shine on your heart. Not more surely does the mountain attract those charged messengers and receive from them the frequent and copious shower, than you will draw down streams of grace through a mediating Redeemer. To ascend one of those majestic heights in a spiritual frame of mind is, indeed, to go up to the courts of the Most High. The atmosphere is rarefied, morally as well as physically speaking, by his presence; and you feel it is good to be there.

And if of devotion, so of many practical virtues, the mountain is a God-commissioned teacher. Here

you may acquire a larger brotherly love. How genial and benignant are these grand elevations! In a clear, calm day they look on all below them with a deep and serene affection; and they inspire each green valley and broad plain with the same generous temper. Thankfully do they receive from them the glad waters they afterward so liberally pour down. Yes, what a sermon of beneficence these mountain-waters are every day preaching!

Look at the tiny springs as they give forth each its little stream, to blend in the great final river. The heavens have sent down, in the past night, their pure gifts of dew; and behold in this "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Verily, it is as the dew of Hermon, and as the dews that descended upon the mountains of Zion. So grows the modest brook; and kindly it sings all the day long to the bending and listening trees. Are you disposed to judge your neighbor harshly? Mark the benevolent sun, how it holds the great clouds over each seam and crag and unsightly thing on the mountain-side, covering its faults with the divine mantle of charity.

Nowhere is firmness of principle better enforced than by the "everlasting hills." There they have stood, battling with the storms of centuries, and bearing honorable scars. Their high rocks are "silvered o'er with age." The "Old Man of the Mountain" has looked every tempest in the eye, nor blenched nor feared. If the tree was baffled in its attempts to stretch itself upward, it has grown

what it could; and the zone of shrubs and dwarfs teaches us never to yield to temptations and obstacles. And each bare and broken tree, like some commemorative obelisk, admonishes us, having done all in the Christian warfare, to stand. Each barrier and precipice bids us oppose a bold front to error and sin; and every promontory that buttresses the great mountain, castellated and impregnable, watching the generations as they pass, and the empires that waste away, adjures us to be steadfast in the right, and immovably united to God and Christ.

Look up hither, and learn to prize your Christian privileges. As these mountain-peaks catch the first ray of the morning's sun, so are you living in the very height of spiritual opportunities, receiving the day-dawn of that Saviour who is the light of the world. On this table-land of church ministrations and Sabbath-schools, where law and liberty shield your conscience and your homes, let not the emblem be lost upon you. Exalted above the valleys of heathenism, permitted to drink the first and the last rays of the Sun of Righteousness, how can you "neglect so great salvation"? Not more varied are the mountain hues than our means of grace. The dew and the shower are ours; and we dwell where those very lightnings are created which cleanse and clarify earth's spiritual atmosphere. How exemplary should be our lives, how holy our conversation!

In trials, disappointment, and grief, let us lift up our eyes to the hills; for truly from them "our help

cometh." The cloud-cap of the morning at noon may pass away ; and though it tarry long, yet, as in the natural, so in the spiritual world, thick clouds may prevent our losing that inner warmth so essential to the health of the spirit. If trials multiply, forget not, that after long rains the air becomes all the more vitalized and pure. Watch, and God will present some new and more cheering phase of himself in your ever-changing, cloud-like experience. Though your heart should be seared by the avalanches of bereavement and sorrow, yet the slide-mark may be overgrown by the green trees of brighter days ; or if it abide in your bosom, it will notify you of a present God. And even "the notch" that is forced open by the convulsion of awful calamities, often only prepares a way through which future messengers of mercy may pass, or the river of our troubles find its needful outlet.

The high mountain speaks to us, finally, of a future and endless existence. Rooted and abiding as the perpetual hills is this treasure within us. Darkness may sometimes gather on the coming world, even as the blue mist of the far-off mountain deepens into blackness ; but if Christ be formed within, we have the hope of a glory before which the brightest hours of these material elevations fade to obscurity. In the valley our prospect is narrow ; and there is no plain whose horizon is not comparatively near ; but,

"In the mountains one may feel his faith ;
There may he see the writing. All things there
Breathe immortality, revolving life ;
There littleness is not ; the least things seem infinite."

There we realize how moral and spiritual elevation eclipses all others. There, with Christ by our side, we are adoringly lost in that majestic, mysterious Presence, who was before the mountains were brought forth, who built all earth for his sanctuary, who himself is from everlasting to everlasting, and to whom we may confidently look, when our mortal career shall terminate, to open for us a new home in loftier regions, enduring as his existence and effulgent as his glory.

XIX.

THE HOLY SPIRIT.

AND HE BREATHED ON THEM, AND SAITH UNTO THEM, "RECEIVE YE THE HOLY SPIRIT." — John xx. 22.

By the term Holy Spirit, as here used, we are to understand that Spirit which proceeds from God, that effluence of light, power, wisdom, and grace of which he is the author and originator. It is the very nature of God to pour himself continually forth. He is not an inactive and self-enclosed being, but ever-operative, and inherently and essentially diffusive. The external universe is everywhere pervaded by his presence, and all created things are the workmanship of his hand. Nor is this all; he never leaves that which he has made, but presides over, directs and controls all events and all issues.

This is true, obviously and confessedly, in regard to the lower orders of creatures. To the attentive and reverent observer it is equally manifest in the nature and experience of man. Historically speaking, we find scattered along the annals of our race tokens of an ever-present Divinity. Psychologically, or in the soul itself, there are testimonials of an indwelling God. Every faculty, gift, tendency, implies

its corresponding object ; the world within us is full of aspirations, desires, and yearnings, which not only intimate, but, to the philosophic observer, afford proof positive, that there is an object on which they may rest. In a broad sense, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, or God himself, — for in the Scriptures these phrases are interchanged, — moves over the whole race of mankind, Pagan as well as Christian, savage no less than civilized, the ignorant and the learned, the pure and the impure. Like the atmosphere, it envelops, interpenetrates, vivifies, and sustains the entire world.

But in the Bible we find continual reference to the Spirit of God, not only as it moved over chaos and called the earth into order and beauty, and as it sustains all animated nature, but especially in its operation and influence upon man. The devout Hebrew traced every event immediately to Jehovah ; all hearts were said to be in his hand ; he is the witness, the judge, the final rewarder of all deeds and of our very thoughts, and without him we can do nothing.

This truth is the key to the religion of the New Testament. The aim and end of the Gospel was to introduce a dispensation of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. Man is there represented as a sinner ; and not only as an actual offender, but so diseased in his very propensities that he can be restored to spiritual health and soundness only by a power out of and above himself. Thus corrupt and prostrate, God did not leave him to perish, but put forth a strong arm to lift him up and redeem him. He laid help,

the help of his Holy Spirit, on Jesus Christ. His very birth took place through the overshadowing of that Spirit. All human beings had failed to deliver man from sin; and now the instrumentality is entirely new;—the Saviour is a divine being, and he shall not fail.

But what, specifically, does the New Testament intend by the Holy Spirit?

Its main signification is that of a power, or operative influence, working on the human soul, either by miraculous endowments, or through the ordinary channels of nature. It is compared to a gift; to Christ it was given without measure; by it the disciples were baptized; they were partakers of it. Sometimes it is said to be “poured out,” like water; then to be “shed forth,” as if it were rays of light. Believers were “sealed” with the Holy Spirit; converts were “filled” with it, as by an ethereal essence. And often it is likened to fire: “quench not the Spirit.” By these, and other analogies, it is made to comprehend all the means and the motives by which men are led to repent of their sins, and are converted to God, and turned to holiness and love.

Such is its sense in the abstract. To make it more vivid and real to the mind, it is sometimes set forth as a person. It is then said to be “grieved,” to “help our infirmities,” to “make intercession” for us, to teach and to reprove. But this is done, very often, only by a figure of speech. If the Holy Spirit is represented as speaking unto men and ex-

exercising other human functions, so are many other things in the Scriptures. The stars "sang together;" the sea heard "the voice of the Lord;" "heart and flesh cry out for God." Charity is said to rejoice, believe, hope, and endure. Wisdom dwells with men; sin worketh in us; and death wages war. In the same way does the Holy Spirit teach, reprove, and intercede; that is, by a personification. If the Holy Spirit were an actual person, and distinct from God, it could not possibly be "poured out," as it is said to be, like water, or "shed forth" as if it were light. Men could not be "anointed" with a person, nor yet could we "quench" a person, like fire.

Bearing this exposition in mind, let us return to the great doctrine before us. It is quite apparent that, though the Spirit of God has operated on all men, and in every age, yet there is a peculiar force in the phrase Holy Spirit, as interpreted by the mission and work of Christ. Others, mere men, could exhort to moral goodness, and, in rare cases, attain themselves to much excellence; but they could not reform the race; even his faithful forerunner could only baptize with water, and call on the Jew to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. All previous teachers, indeed, in varying degrees of course, failed of their aim. Nothing short of the dove-like Spirit of God, poured without measure upon Jesus of Nazareth, had power to accomplish this mighty work. He could convert and save, because he baptized "with the Holy Spirit and with fire."

“With fire”; mark the force of this figure. Among the various emblems employed to illustrate the operations of the Spirit, none is more striking than this. It is likened to the wind which bloweth where it listeth, in seemingly arbitrary currents, coming we cannot tell whence, going we know not whither; yet of vast power and mighty in its sweep. It is like the air, unseen, but refined, sublimated, vital in its essence. Not more pure is the blue ether which wraps its cerulean robe daily and nightly around us; nor more quick and ever-potent is the electric element, whether operating in the sometimes terrible thunder-cloud, or in its pervasive, circumambient, all-penetrating course through every material thing. But its crowning attribute is the gift to search through our being, and, like fire, to burn up our follies and sins, our thoughtlessness, self-delusion, and purposed deceitfulness. When the Holy Spirit tries our virtue through manifold temptations, there sometimes comes out of the furnace a virtue more precious than gold that perisheth; and then haply a serene faith, born of heart-deep throes, and baptized with prayers and tears. And this will abide; it will shine forth, like the asbestos, all the whiter for the flames it has passed through; it will shine unto honor and glory at the appearing of Christ.

It is not unusual to confine the work of the Holy Spirit to the age of the apostles. We may speculate on its mode of operation, until we virtually, if not avowedly, banish it from our heart and our side.

“Once,” say some, “there were miracles, but not now”; and this is true. But why add, “once there was a Holy Spirit poured out on the disciple and filling the soul, but not now”? Nay, brethren, take away this power, and who or what can discharge for us its offices?

The Holy Spirit must needs be ever here for multiplied reasons: first, to reprove the world of sin. No one is ever “pricked to the heart,” his conscience thoroughly awakened, and his need of an entire change of purpose, life, and character wrought into his inmost being, giving no sleep to his eyes, because of his sense of indifference to God and true holiness and of personal sinfulness, except by the power of the Holy Spirit, “searching into and dividing” his very soul.

And if to commence, so also to complete the work of regeneration, we must have the Holy Spirit. “That which is born of the flesh, is flesh.” All low aims, feeble resolutions, and self-seeking attempts fail to convert the sinner. That only which is born of the Spirit, begotten in us by the sought aid of God, *is* Spirit. To bring one out of the darkness of irreligion into the light of a true and living piety, demands more than human power; it requires nothing short of the energy of the Father, sent through his superhuman Son.

This alone can secure our growth in grace. What will keep the new-born soul in the strait path of godliness and virtue? Why do so many lose their first love, go away, and walk no more with

Christ? God did his part well ; he set the fair plant of Paradise within.

“But why reclines its beauteous head?
And whither is its fragrance fled?
Too plain, alas! the languor shows
The unkindly soil in which it grows.”

When once a soul has been born of the Spirit, that Heavenly Sun through which it was effected must be admitted steadily to its bosom,—

“Else will the frost, or blast, or storm,
Wither and rend its tender form.”

Among the agencies of salvation, none is suited to do more for us than the Bible. But what renders it efficacious to the soul? Let it be read in a worldly and careless temper, as one reads the novel or the newspaper, and it falls dead on the eye. It is only when the mind rises to the elevation of the sacred writers themselves, that the Scriptures quicken, fertilize, and save. The mental vision once purged by the present, Christ-sent Spirit, we read on the sacred page, in characters of fire, “The Word of God.” Then the letter, no more dead, is clad in an immortal vesture, on which is written, “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”

Why are these pulpit ministrations so comparatively ineffective? Why is the prayer so often left to the minister alone, and the sermon heard only to be judged and sentenced, as eloquent, passable, or dull? Why, but because the services are not recognized as presided over by the eternal and ineffable Spirit? Listen, follow, join in the faith of Him who

baptizes every true minister, and is in every prayer and exhortation, and every song of the sanctuary, with the Spirit of the Father. Let it be indeed a divine and not a human service, and it would awe and thrill the worshipper; and then, poor as might be the words, the soul so humble and so earnest, would clothe them with a Pentecostal power.

Take the office of private prayer; do we perform it coldly and as a mere form, the chill comes from a lost Redeemer. Only be indeed conscious that Christ stands by your side, breathing on you the Holy Spirit, and you will pray with fervor and pray without ceasing.

The Scriptures dwell much on the need, not only of the new birth, but of a thorough and constant sanctification.

And how is this accomplished? Only through the Holy Spirit. Earth does but infect us with earthliness; it is the supernal region which sheds sanctity on the soul. There is no perfecting of saints, no edifying, building up the body of Christ in the Church or the individual, apart from this celestial influence. They alone tread the high and steep path of the pure in heart, the meek and humble, the God-born and the Christ-accepted, who, fixing their eye on the gate of glory, "walk in the Spirit."

The great excellence of this course is, that it is not only spiritual, but practical. There is nothing of true good to the family, the community, our country, or our race which is not permeated with the influence, direct and indirect, of God. Do you prize

temperance, freedom, and peace ? They come only to the nation or the individual, pure and permanent, from the Divine and eternal One, the God of the free and the God of peace. What are joy, gentleness, goodness, long-suffering, meekness, and a universal love, — what but “fruits of the Spirit” ? To have the branches good, we must make the tree good ; to have domestic purity and faithfulness, the good citizen, the good man, power without, there must be first a Christ-given power within.

Would God the wide Christian world might see this great truth with united vision, and lay on a common altar all those dogmas which now keep them apart. Would that we could return to the simplicity of the primitive believers. “In the early Church,” says Neander, “some believed the Holy Spirit to be a mere power ; some confounded the idea of person with his gifts ; others supposed him to be a creature ; some believed him to be God ; others, still, were undecided. The practical recognition of him, however, as the principle of the divine life in man was almost universal.” This is what we need now ; not a toiling after exact conceptions of the intellect on this subject, but to accept the plain language of Scripture, and open our hearts to this heavenly visitant.

The doctrine of Jesus, taken from his own words, is explicit. The Spirit is called “the Comforter,” whom, says our Saviour, “the Father will send in my name.” “If I go away, I will send the Comforter.” As the Father had sent him, so would he send “the Spirit of Truth.” And this promise was

fulfilled, again and again, to the early disciples. Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father ; to this Peter and Paul bore witness ; and the whole record of the Acts of the apostles is filled with the like testimony.

The Holy Spirit is traced always to the Father, and from him brought through the Son to this world. Into this faith the first converts were baptized,—“into the Father,” as the Source of all truth and all holy living, “into the Son,” as the Mediator, bearing that truth and life unto man, and “into the Holy Spirit,” as the embodiment or personification of the power employed from on high for man’s conversion and salvation.

Beautiful is this bond, hallowed is the union. Our Father raying down light and warmth on the soul, and Christ, the medium through which it passes, filled with the very Spirit of God, and breathing it out on his chosen messengers, and shedding it forth,—“tongues of fire,”—in the Pentecostal hour. Nor was the celestial gift exhausted in those primal days. Hear the bright words, “I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” Forever,—thanks for the promise. Now we do know that the heavenly current blows, not fitfully, and at certain times and on favored individuals alone, but that on every humble and willing recipient, now and evermore, doth

“ the sacred Spirit breathe
Fresh gales from Heaven on all beneath.”

Open we our bosoms that this divine Friend may

enter ; keep we near to the Father, and near to the Son ; subject we all our motives to the Holy Spirit ; then will it shed gifts and graces, faith, knowledge, counsel in trouble, peace amid tears, strength against tempters ;—these and all needful things, holy and beneficent, shall be and abound in us evermore.

XX.

THE HONOR OF LABOR.

WE BESEECH YOU, BRETHREN, THAT YE DO YOUR OWN BUSINESS, AND WORK WITH YOUR OWN HANDS. — 1 Thes. iv. 10, 11.

CHRISTIANITY is not more remarkable for its high spirituality than for its close connection with the practical concerns of this passing world. It is not a religion for special occasions, for public exhibition, and scenic effect. Its delights are in the simple routine of our every-day affairs. It accompanies us in all our pursuits, and covers our entire experience and our whole life. Not, either, for subtle speculations and themes, nor yet for mystic revery was it given us. It takes cognizance of our various avocations, and concerns itself with the manner in which we perform the commonest tasks and the spirit we carry into the humblest services of life. The New Testament, no less than the Old, abounds in precepts and exhortations on this subject. It represents work, either of the body or the mind, as a duty binding on the whole race.

By the very constitution of our nature we cannot be happy without constant employment. We need, to this end, the exercise of every faculty and power, physical as well as mental. Attempt to live in idle-

ness, and you become a prey to disease ; imagination soon peoples your little world with troubles, and the fancied no less than the real ones, make you at last miserable.

When we return at night to our firesides with a weary frame and exhausted spirit, we may repine at our lot. "Why," asks the disquieted soul, "why am I compelled thus to toil on, day upon day, and year upon year, without end or intermission? O that I could find rest for body and mind!" But what *is* rest? We cannot enjoy it except when fatigued by effort ; it is the sleep of the laboring man which is sweet.

That gloomy poet who says of labor, "'Tis the primal curse," is constrained to add that the curse has been "softened into mercy." Yes, the real curse would have been, not to eat our bread in the sweat of our brow, but to sit down our whole life perforce in idleness. Had God bestowed on us all these capacities to think and toil, and then given us no use for them, ay, nothing to put them to the stretch, we might then with good reason have murmured at our lot. As another has well said, "To have no calling which demands the attention of every earnest moment and engrosses the anxious care of the matured mind, is to be an alien in nature." Eden was a scene of bliss, but it was also, and to this very end, a scene of labor. Thus spake the lord of creation : —

"Man hath his daily work of body or of mind
Appointed, which declares his dignity,
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways."

Labor is made the condition of health. The material universe, to maintain its order and energy, needs constant action. What keeps the atmosphere pure and wards off miasma and death? Motion, the breeze that stirs its pulsations. What preserves the waters in their sweetness, and fills them with a life-giving power? Motion; let them stagnate, and they straightway breed death. Occupation has been well called "the salt of life." It is the grand barrier against decay and dissolution, as in nature, so in man. Neglect physical exercise, and sooner or later the penalty will come, disease, suffering, an impaired if not a broken constitution.

And not the body alone, the mind also requires habitual exercise. The labor of the hands may be pursued, and it sometimes is, voluntarily, and in the spirit of cupidity, until the higher nature is sunk in the lower. I am told there is a class of men in this our New England, worth tens of thousands, who do not read, month after month, some parts of the year, so much as a newspaper. "They are all body," as one remarked of them, "they have no soul." We pity the poor operative of England, doomed from a little child to mental as well as physical pauperism. But what shall we say of men who, in this very focus of intellectual light, to pile up silver and gold, thus beggar their inward and immortal well-being?

Christianity commands all men to labor for the supply of their own wants. Paul enjoined on the Thessalonians to "work that they might lack nothing." Adverting to a certain class who were indo-

lent "busybodies," "we exhort them," says he, that they "work and eat their own bread." "Nay," he adds, "if any man will not work, neither shall he eat." Personal effort is thus made a Christian duty; he who is slothful in business, leaning supinely on others, is an alien from the commonwealth of Christ. Habits of diligence, self-help, and self-subsistence are part and parcel of a Gospel character.

We are to toil that we may accumulate the means of doing good. "Let every man," — so runs the injunction to the Ephesian converts, — "let every man work with his hands, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Charity to the destitute is in itself praiseworthy, but when one gives his own earnings, it is twice blest. It ennobles the donor, enlarging his soul, filling him with sweet recollections, bringing back gratitude upon himself, and carrying forward a treasure to the storehouse above.

Then, too, labor is friendly to virtue. We hear much of the dangers of wealth; we are told how hard it is to join piety to prosperity. But who will say it is easy to unite a religious temper with abject want? "Give me," said a Scriptural sage, "neither poverty nor riches, lest I be full and deny God; or lest I be poor and steal and take the name of God in vain." More than one hapless mother has been locked up in prison for purloining bread for her starving children and fuel to keep the frost from their limbs. Fearful are the temptations of poverty. In some cases it not only prompts one to take from others dishonestly, but it leads to deception and untruthfulness, is a root

of envy and bitterness. Many a naturally sweet disposition has it spoiled. Often, the more fallen one's fortune, the less tolerant is he of human errors and infirmities. "Which of two men," asks another, "will be most disposed to judge charitably, to act justly, and to do his duty faithfully, he who, on the poorest pittance, can just keep himself and his family struggling through years of discomfort, pinched in every department of his miserable thrift, or he who, on a little more, feels that he has a warmer bed, a more nourishing dinner, a brighter fire and a better coat than his half-paid neighbor?"

I contend that, as a Christian man, one should desire and seek a competency of this world's goods. True, our Saviour did say, "Blessed are ye poor"; but he did not say they were blessed *because* they were poor. No, it was because in their wretched and undesirable condition his religion could give them consolation. Jesus Christ bids us not be anxious for the morrow; but a very poor man cannot help being anxious. It is not in human nature that one's spirits should not be wasted, and the very strength he needs for labor sometimes exhausted, by his terrific fears for the future. On moral, therefore, no less than economical grounds, a man is bound to seek a sufficiency of this world's goods. He is bound to use all legitimate means for this purpose; and among these, first, midst, and last, stands labor.

Idleness and ignorance have been called the parents of vice. He who is poor because he is idle, and will not do all he can to earn a good livelihood,

is father of a whole family of vices. No man deserves a more pointed and severe reprobation. Far different is his case who is needy through misfortune. If a man cannot find employment, or has a large circle of dependants, or suffers want because of sickness, then we should pity him from our hearts ; and then a merciful God will consider his temptations, and forgive those faults which spring inevitably from his hapless condition.

And now, if labor brings with it not only worldly possessions, but health, happiness, and virtue, I remark, next, it must be in the highest degree reputable. The toil of the hands, instead of being, as some imagine, a badge of disgrace, is a credential of honor. We may be ashamed to subsist upon others, but never ashamed to labor. It was a proverb of the Jews, "He who teaches not his son some honest occupation, is as if he taught him robbery." Patriarchs, prophets, and kings were shepherds and husbandmen. No Hebrew was so elevated by rank or by wealth that he would not put his own hand to the plough. Who were the first teachers of Christianity? Some of them were fishermen ; one was a tent-maker, — nor was he ashamed of his occupation. "We did not," says Paul, "eat any man's bread for naught ; but wrought, with labor and travail, day and night, working with our own hands." And what was Jesus Christ himself, the image of God, the Saviour of the world? — The son of a carpenter ; trained, without question, to the same calling as his father. Who and what, then, are *we*, that we should

scorn any honest pursuit, even though it soil the hands or the dress? Or who may think meanly of a neighbor because he treads in the furrow or wields the hammer? Idleness, idleness alone is a disgrace; and labor, whether of the body or the mind, is an honor.

I speak of the mind; some conceive there is no labor except that of the hands. They think professional men,—for example, clergymen, physicians, lawyers,—as another remarks, “have little to do except to sit still, and allow the money of the laboring man to flow into their pockets.” A capital mistake! Dream not that muscular effort is the only labor to mortals. Many a man who lives by thought would gladly exchange his aching head and shattered nerves and sleepless nights for the tranquil brain and undisturbed repose that more than counterpoise the hardest toil of the frame. The demands on the mind, too, are ceaseless; the work of the head knows no change of seasons, no rest for weather, nothing of those intervals of inaction granted one day in seven and every sun that sets to him who drives the plane, and lays his bricks or his paints. The true professional man is as much a laborer as he who works at the anvil, carries a hod, or turns a switch. The drone, whether at the bar or the work-bench, is a blot on society; but all real toil, whether of the brain or the hands, unites one with the world-wide fraternity of honorable laborers.

The Gospel is a law of equality, as in all other things, so in labor. There are those, I know well,

who are compelled to toil to excess, worn down by the drudgery of their handicraft, while others practically know nothing of effort either of body or mind. But is this a Christian condition of society? Let the principles of Christianity prevail, and we should never see, as we now do in the Old World, the millionaire look down with contempt on him who for the scantiest subsistence must grind at the mill till his body is crushed and his soul corroded. It has been computed, that if all the human beings on the globe would labor but four hours per day, the whole race might live in competence and comfort. Would God that the pulpit could utter some word that should help on that truly Christian consummation. Would that every rich man might be *willing* to work with his own hands, if need be, four hours each day, could he thereby release his brethren toil-worn from these crushing tasks, and pour joy, as he often might, into the poor man's cup.

Labor is manifestly an ordinance of God. The world might have been so constructed by its Creator as to supersede man's tasks. "The motion of the globe on its axis might have been the power to move a mighty machinery for the production of all that man wants. But where, then, had been human energy, perseverance, patience, virtue, heroism? Cut off at one blow from the world." Better, then, that the earth be given to man as it is, a dark mass whereon to labor; better that rude and unsightly materials be provided in the ore-bed and the forests for him to fashion into use and beauty.

Yes ; and to illustrate the blessings of labor, God has given us his own example. " My Father worketh hitherto," said Jesus, " and I work." How was this world produced ? " In the beginning," we read, " God created the heavens and the earth in six days, and on the seventh day he ended his work, which he had made." And did he leave the universe at that point ? No ; by a mighty supervision he continued on his work. Every day and every hour he wheels worlds on worlds and systems on systems through their stupendous courses. We ourselves are his workmanship. It is his own hand which robes this earth in its June verdure. He touches the plains, and they are enamelled with bud and blossom ; he breathes on the forests, and they are clothed with ten thousand leaf-garments ; he quickens the dust, and myriads of insects spring forth, radiant with energy and brilliant as the diamond. Away, then, with the thought that it is disreputable to labor. The lot which our Father hath appointed for us, that and no other is accompanied with true dignity. The lower animals are left for the most part unemployed. Man only is called to work ; he is elevated in this respect to the likeness of his Maker. Not idleness, but toil, effort, either of hand or head, that is our heavenly sonship, that is our true nobility.

We are called from this high position to give thanks for that which, in a false view, has been thought a curse. Look on the world as God regards it, and you will find no service discreditable. Seen

in its higher relations, labor is a hallowed thing. Life is no longer a dreary line of crushing tasks and low ends ; it is consecrated by the Father.

“Temples rise on every soil,
In the forest, in the city,
And their priest is daily toil.”

The human race in this spirit will labor on patiently, each in his sphere, however seemingly humble ; cheered by the smiles of God and good men, irradiated by an immortal hope, waiting at the vestibule of that temple not made with hands, and destined, if faithful to Christ and humanity, to enter it and hear the approving voice : “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them.”

XXI.

CHRIST TEACHING REST ON THE LAKE.

AS THEY SAILED, HE FELL ASLEEP ; AND THERE CAME DOWN A
STORM OF WIND ON THE LAKE. — Luke viii. 23.

A SINGULAR condition this, most persons imagine, in a moment of such peril. It argues, if not an insensibility to danger, certainly a marvellous composure and trust. But this case does not stand alone as an illustration of the doctrine and duty it involves. The command given by our Saviour to his disciples on the evening which preceded his crucifixion, "Take your rest," is usually regarded as more a permission than a positive injunction. "The flesh is weak," it is said, and out of regard to that weakness, he allowed their weary frames to give way to sleep. If it could have been so, they ought to have taken no rest, but kept perpetually awake.

But the compassion of our Saviour, so manifest on all other occasions, could not have failed him on this. Agitated, distressed, and exhausted as they were, and at this hour, too, of midnight, he must have rejoiced that they were able to sleep. If it was their duty to watch amid perils by foes, it was no less incumbent on them to obey his merciful

behest, — especially as watchfulness would now be unavailing, — to “sleep on” and take their rest.

We are accustomed to dwell much on the moral obligation of labor. And, beyond question, it is among our highest duties to be diligent, active, and earnest in our daily avocations. But it is equally a duty at fit seasons to rest. There is no virtue in toiling on until, either from physical or mental exhaustion, we faint and fall in the noonday of life.

It may indeed be contended that we are compelled to labor without intermission or rest, for the subsistence of our families, if not for a personal livelihood. But if this be so, then the arrangements of society have become such as to violate the clear purpose of God. Man is not compelled by his Creator to indulge in luxuries or enjoyments, as regards his domestic arrangements or his personal gratifications, to procure and to sustain which he must sacrifice life, health, or peace. If the demands of fashion bind the husband and father in a bondage to labor so stern and inexorable as to forbid his needful rest, then there is a call on this subject, from God in Christ no less than in nature, for a speedy reform.

Look abroad, and see how distinct in this matter is the teaching of nature. We point often to her works as a model of labor. With the same confidence may she be summoned as a witness for rest. All the works of God, whether mighty or minute, are written over with the great law of repose. The majestic sun, often cited as an exemplar of industry, presents also, phenomenally, a type of rest. He does

not blaze down with uninterrupted rays, but now for an hour and now for a long day, by the interposing clouds, he gives to earth a respite from his hot beams ; and when the journey of the day is over, he sinks calmly on his pillow. The waters flow diligently down the hill-side and across the broad plain ; but mark how they pause in the quiet pool, in the still lake, in the seas, and at last in the great deep.

Take your stand by that northern placid sheet, so appropriately named by the red man, "The smile of the Great Spirit." The very term is redolent of serenity. Even the untutored Indian saw in it the reflex of that calm smile we see on the face of the Christian's Father. Through his inherent sense of the beautiful, he associated with it the presence of the "First Good, First Fair." In his dreamy hours, now lying on its borders, and now plying his light canoe over its glassy bosom, even he could see in it tokens of that sure goodness which "giveth his beloved sleep." Looking down, down its pellucid waters, he saw the deep lake repose on its shining sands ; and its finny occupants, there darting to and fro, would here come and poise themselves and rest at his feet. All around stand the never-changing pine and fir ; and they too bow their heads, as if to repose on the waters ; and in their branches sit the gay birds which with "un-anxious joy" sing at the day-dawn and rest at the sun-rising and in the noontide heat. The cattle also come down to drink the pure waters, and repose in their coolness. In the day of the Indian, the wild beast would steal out, and here serenely slake his

thirst. On the shore is a grand, all-encircling break-water, not of man's device, but built up, it would seem, in the long ages by the rolling thither of fit stones, nicely washed and freed from sand, and, in the breaking of the winter, pressed up and set in order by the marshalling ice-cakes. "Here," says the God-stationed guard to the dashing element, "here shall thy proud waves be stayed; — at these pillars shalt thou rest."

Cast your eye upward, and learn a lesson from these towering mountains. The little hill comes down to rest at the lake-side; and above and beyond, the grand mountain throws its tranquil roots across plain and valley. Those gigantic rocks speak of ancient upheavals and convulsions, from which for thousands of years they have enjoyed a rest. To the south you see the kingly "Belknap," lifting calmly its triple-crowned head; eastward stands "Cobble-Crown," with its twin summits, offering to one who mounts that peak a picture unsurpassed in diversified, wide-spread, and serene beauties; and high above all towers the monarch "Ossipee," nearest the celestial throne, and supporting, as it were, the undisturbed heavens.

Take now the wings of spirit-like steam and course your way over the lake. You are charmed by its multitudinous islands, — those, so spacious that man has nestled among their forests and rocks and forced the hard soil to yield him a subsistence; and these tiny gems, cameo-like and complete, not one of which but has its emerald garniture. On the highest, ever

and anon, is some crosier-tree, lifting its tall head in sacred command above its fellows; on the very lowest, fresh as a new-created thing, you note a tiara of rock-jewels, surmounted by its velvet insignia of royalty.

Go around and over those waters at all hours of the day, and they reiterate the injunction of Christ, "Take your rest." See them at sunrise; the hill-tops have slept the past night beneath the light covering of the dew and the mist; and now morning lifts these rich folds, first from the nearest hill, and then from the far-off mountain-peak; and at length it unveils the broad declivities and the lowliest of the valleys. The helmsman, having navigated by his compass through the dense fogs, now guides his boat by a clear vision of the shore and the isles. Midday with its burning sun, again throws a haze over each distant summit. But as evening draws on, all becomes luminous and transparent. And now night is near, and the approach of sunset on the lake, so rich, so gorgeous, seems at once to

"Lead us to God, — our final rest."

If the sun be partially veiled, count this among your golden hours. The crimson clouds have prepared a magnificent curtain above; and over the low west hangs a drapery of vermillion. Now a ray shoots here, then there, through the very body of those clouds; it is the Father shining through some troublous hour. Beyond lie massive ranges, "Red Hill" donning its robe of purple, and "Ossipee," monarch

of his band of little hills, stands with his face reverently veiled. Follow round the matchless panorama, here a patch of heaven's pure azure, there a scarlet-edged cloud-bank. "There is a bright light," it says to us, "fringing God's darkest providences." The gray skies deepen on to night; the green fields and emerald forests fade down to a silent blackness; and the weary sun at last lays his head on this kingly pillow.

I have spoken of the repose of the lake; but sometimes, like man when agitated by apprehensions or by dire events, it is waked from its accustomed slumber. Then seams of tranquil water are varied by paths of ripples; the winds spring suddenly up, or they stir its deep bosom, putting on their myriad caps; and at one point, — the "Point Judith" of the lake, — you are sometimes rocked to discomfort by the miniature gales. Now the shore is lashed for a few hours, but soon, — and here is another Christ-taught lesson, — all this commotion subsides, and the gentle waves again steal tranquilly up the broad bays, and around the quiet nooks for which this sheet is so justly noted.

In a season of drought, you may see the hill-sides covered here and there in the day by the smoke of flaming forests, and at night they are dotted over with brilliant points and exhibit an occasional volcanic outbreak, as the Church, in the imagined dearth of reviving showers of grace, — her love waxing cold, — still feels at times the penal fires of an unquiet conscience. After the long days of heat

and drought, we are at length, by the great, often-doubted, but never withdrawn providential care, visited by joy-giving rain. All nature laughs in response; the waters of the lake give back for each drop a smile; field and flower look up in gratitude; the trees, toiling lately for breath, now respire freely. And man feels a buoyant relief, for to his weary hours and waiting eyes God has given rest.

We will not quit our monitory lake before speaking of its night views. The stars always rejoice to sleep on its bosom; and if darkness throws a pall over its face, it is more than redeemed by the glories of moonlight. How those waves now dance beneath its beams, and now subside in silvery quietness under its rule. If by day the airy shadows ride in triumph over the sheeny surface, by night, if you are privileged to witness then a thunder-storm, the play of the lightning calls forth a new glory from its face, to be followed by a soothing subsidence, typical of that rest given by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to the long-tossed soul, that turns at last in faith and repentance unto him.

Seeing thus that all nature, animate and inanimate, exhorts us, if to labor, so also to repose, I have only to add, that philosophy sanctions the instruction, and religion confirms it. When God instituted the Sabbath, he had regard to the needs of both body and mind. One day in seven is found absolutely essential for rest. Why is America so slow to heed this great truth? Our people often grudge the hours given to repose; sometimes the artisan works

at his bench and the merchant adjusts his accounts on the Sabbath. Man, instead of looking at the flower which closes its petal eyes duly at night, toils on, cheating himself not seldom of his needful sleep ; hands, brain, pen, know no rest. These are those, like one of our recent Presidents, who die in mid-life for the lack of recreation. When shall we learn that the laws of nature, the laws of God, are inexorable? Not the teacher and the child alone, but we all do need our vacations.

There is a religion in rest. In heaven the cherub and the seraph "cry continually to God"; but on earth even the holiest avocations require seasons of rest. Such a season we have now enjoyed. Our church has been fitly closed, and the pastor has sought a respite from his work. Thanks for that kind Spirit which has watched over us, and prolonged our days, and invites us again to meet in these dear hours of communion with God and his Son. So let us enter on this renewal of our worship and so may we frequent the house of our Father, that, by prayer here and by justice and mercy among our fellow-men, we may discharge that high moral labor and enjoy that spiritual refreshment, which shall qualify us for the rest which "remaineth for the people of God."

XXII.

FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.

WE HAVE PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.—1 John iii. 14.

IN the Christian dispensation we have three distinct views of the subject of death. One refers to the termination of this mortal life; another to the inaction of the soul, which is hence called spiritual death; still another describes the condition of the unholy. This is termed “the second death.” It signifies the extinction of happiness; and so understood, throughout the Scriptures, life and death are contrasted with one another as happiness and its opposite. But this distinction relates, I conceive, exclusively to the spiritual and not to the material part of our nature. In all that concerns the dissolution of the body, and the fears and apprehensions that so often attend that event, the Christian is said to “have passed from death unto life.” The province of Christianity is one of life. It is not a dispensation built upon, or concerned essentially with, death.

But is this the view ordinarily taken of our blessed religion? I apprehend it is not. There are not a few who regard Christianity as a “ministration of death.” The representations of it are such as in

effect to make the success of the Gospel depend on man's dread of the hour of his dissolution.

This is done by regarding and describing death as a punishment for sin. Many suppose that the warning uttered to Adam against eating the forbidden fruit, "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," referred, partly at least, to the death of his body. Had he not disobeyed his Maker, it is thought he would have been immortal on earth.

Now, with our strong attachment to life, it is natural that we should associate evil with that which compels us to resign it. Consider death as the penalty of sin and you add to whatever previous terrors it might have had one of a most aggravated character. You make "the power of death," as the writer to the Hebrews expresses it, reside in "the Devil." The prince of this world is a prince of darkness; and you connect all that is fearful in the conception of Satan and of the sin he occasions with the hour of death.

But Adam, with a body of an essentially perishable nature, could not have lived forever. Formed of the dust, he must, however innocent, have returned at length to the dust. Had he never indeed sinned, his death would have been far easier and happier; for "the sting of death is sin"; but the event itself would have still taken place.

Again, we make Christianity a ministration of death by clothing that event, as we do, with all possible gloom. The ancient heathen regarded death as the concentration of all that was cruel and hateful.

He reigned, they thought, over this world with the rod of a tyrant. He tore men from their friends and their joys, and hurled them down to a deep subterranean cavern, there for a season to grope and howl and pine. And how many Christians speak of death as cruel and inexorable. We are accustomed to look with pity on the dead, as if some fearful calamity had befallen them. When following their bodies to the tomb, we dwell on the cold clay, as though with that our every hope of the departed was buried.

True it is that death is the separation from friends, and it is the part, not of Christian tenderness, but of a stoical insensibility, to speak lightly of the sad hour when the dearest bonds are riven, and the face which gave joy to our being is enclosed for the last time from our mortal view. But if reason forbids any solace in that hour, and friendship sometimes strives in vain to pour oil on the burning wound, yet we may never forget that He who, as he stood at the grave of the brother of Martha and Mary, uttered those sublime words, "I am the resurrection and the life," says to us with authority, "He that believeth in me shall never die."

How often have we seen representations of death as a frightful skeleton armed with a scythe; and on the gravestone there was placed the revolting picture of the hideous head and cross-bones. Now what is all this but making Christianity a "ministration of death." If the professed believers in Jesus Christ, the very saints and salt of the earth do this, who

are to join in the victorious strain, "We have passed from death unto life" ?

It is sad to witness, even on the tombstone, as we sometimes do, words that betray man's want of faith in Heaven and the soul. In the fair month of June, at the close of a beautiful Sabbath-day, I once stood among the monuments of that renowned cemetery which overhangs the gay city of Paris. The hour and the scene spoke of God and immortality. But those inscriptions graven on stones all around me told, almost without exception, of the gloom of scepticism. "Here lies all my happiness" was the sum of their dark story. Not a ray of Christian hope imaged back the glory of that evening's sunset. It is a subject for high satisfaction that our immediate community are beginning to entertain less gloomy views of the resting-place of the dead. May there be many a Mount Auburn opened throughout Christendom.

Our religion is often made a ministration of death by that event being employed as a stimulant to piety. Men are told that they must become religious because they are to die; and this motive is so presented as to give the impression that, were it not for death we might neglect our souls with impunity; and, to heighten the effect of these appeals, every circumstance that attends our departure is arrayed in the blackness of darkness. Sometimes the preacher will dwell on the pangs of the mortal frame, and exaggerate its sufferings, and tell us of the horrible struggles of the dying. He will picture the stiff, cold

form of the dead, the icy hand and glazed eye. He will describe the coffin as terrific. He will carry us to the charnel-house and set forth the process of decay ; — and all this to operate on our fears, and make us religious !

My friends, unless I greatly err, this was not the course of our Lord and Saviour. In no instance did he portray the terrors of the dissolving body as a provocative to piety. His whole ministry was devoted to overcoming the fear of all temporal events. “Fear not,” said he, “them that kill the body and have no more they can do.” He represented this event as of no importance to the true believer, by saying that such should “not taste death.”

Nor did his apostles seek to rouse their hearers by this low principle. On the contrary, they spoke of death as a mere transition from this life to another. They never dwelt upon it except to say that Christ had overcome it. He had risen from the dead ; and such was their faith in the resurrection, and so glorious the power it imparted to them, that they viewed him as but on the threshold of the spiritual temple, who was his whole lifetime in “bondage to the fear of death.” Is it well, then, to lay such stress on this event ? Do we comprehend better than our Master did the true incentives to devotion and virtue ? If not, then let us in this sense also pass from death unto life.

Christianity is a dispensation of life. Its province is a living one. It looks upon death only as a servant of a power higher than itself ; and in that light it is

no longer an enemy, but a friend. The death of the body conducts to the life of the soul. So regarded, it serves to divert our minds from itself and fix them on the spiritual aspects and character of our holy religion.

Turning, then, away from former dispensations, and taking this new view of the destroyer, we perceive that life, not death, is the legitimate source of fear. This is the real "king of terrors." Whatever dark and gloomy associations gather rightfully around our existence, they all belong to that part of it embraced in life. This, and this only, can have in itself any evil, any true and permanent evil.

Life is to be feared. Do you ask why? It is to be feared because it is far more difficult to live well than it is to die well. It is so because we are required to die but once. However arduous it may be to prepare the soul for that trying crisis, the preparation is but for a single occasion. That too is only a momentary transaction. Pass the point around which the winds rage and the waves threaten; you may then, so far as this event is concerned, sail on smoothly and swiftly evermore.

But life is an enduring principle. Be it that you have prepared yourself for to-day's experience, to-morrow also demands preparation. And how many morrows! What months and years and ages will the soul live! And to meet all these in the true frame, to pass all the perils and vanquish all the foes that beset our life, how infinitely harder is this than once to die, to die calmly, happily, and even

triumphantly ! We have a long catalogue of men who have fallen for their country on the battle-field, and yet in how few instances had the whole life been devoted to principle, patriotism, and duty. We cannot doubt that, under strong excitements and at times more have died martyrs for their faith than have lived a long term of consistent purity and piety.

It has been said that "liberal Christianity is a very good religion to live by, but not one to die by." I cannot regard this expression as at all to the discredit of our faith, and that for two reasons. If we can have but one of these good influences from any system of belief, it is certainly better to receive that which can sway the life than that which merely affords support in our last moments. For the test of the true Christian according to Christ, and according to reason also, is the general character, not the appearance at a single hour, even though it be our final hour. And we are certain that it is far easier to nerve one's self up to a single event in our experience than to bear a burden which presses on all our days, on every word, deed, thought, and feeling of our lives.

But the assertion cannot be true, that a doctrine which is good to live by will not support one in death. For what will be our hope and confidence in that final hour ? Can we be happy if we have lived in violation of the law of God ? As we look forward to the judgment-seat of Christ, will not our minds be carried irresistibly back to the lives we have hitherto led ? Jesus informs us, it is they "who have done good" that shall come forth to the resurrection of

happiness. And when and what is our opportunity for doing good? Not certainly on the bed of death alone. No, it is only by patient continuance in a holy, self-denying, spiritual course that we can truly do good. So that the faith which is sufficient for life is sufficient also for death.

Christianity is a dispensation of life, because it was given us for the undying part of our nature. Why did Jesus Christ come, suffer, and offer himself up on the cross? It was to save the soul. But death, temporal death, can do nothing for this part of our nature. Its province is not that of spirit, but that of matter. The body is all it can affect. It can turn that into clay; and this is all it can do.

Is it objected that death is fearful because it leads to such consequences? Let us see what is here the real foundation for fear. Not certainly the close of this life, taken alone, separate from its associations. No, it is what follows death, that may rationally excite our apprehensions. After death comes the judgment; and that is what should awaken our fears. It is the law of retribution and its execution on ourselves.

But if this be the correct view, there is no more occasion to dread the hour of our departure than the previous hours and years of our life. It is the period which precedes the final moment that determines the character of our death. If you saw an individual on the brink of being crushed by a locomotive engine, it would be the engine, the threatening cause of the man's death, that you would most dread; that ar-

rested, your fears would at once cease. The soul-crushing engine is sin; it is that, therefore, we should fear far more than the termination of this life, where its work will cease. Every day and every hour that exposes us to that terrific evil, in one word, our moral life, that is the only rational object of fear. The thought of the pressure and perils and tyranny of temptation, that we live in a world where its ravages are so quick and awful, this may well cause us to tremble. The idea that we have sinned so long and so grievously and that we may do it yet longer, the prospect of doing evil, nay, of being indolent and unprofitable servants amid such momentous responsibilities, these things, in one word life and not death, is the true "king of terrors."

In another point of view we may see how death is made by Christ subordinate to life. If this event had been the greatest of calamities our Saviour would have done something to avert it. But how far was he from doing this? "Whosoever," said he, "will save his life, shall lose it." That is, he that regards the death of the body as so fearful that he will renounce his faith, or will prove recreant to truth and duty to save his life, that man shall be spiritually destroyed. No, Jesus did not place this supreme value in the mere mortal breath. He showed that man has an interest which transcends infinitely the province of death. It was this estimate of life which bore him with intrepid step, through ignominy and pangs and sorrows, up the hill of Calvary. It is this to which we owe the godlike

spirit of Christian self-sacrifice. And it is only by mentally abolishing death that we can ever gain this divine temper of Jesus.

Christianity, we come now to say, teaches that death is a mere circumstance in an immortal life. As the hour of birth introduces us to this world, so the hour of death does to the world before us. It is what follows each of these events and not the events themselves, which affects and concerns us.

Death does not change one tittle the nature, character, and essence of the soul. It is but a passage from one room in the great mansions of our being to another. Our capacities, reason, conscience, mind, and heart will remain unaltered through it. We shall enter the next state precisely as we left this ; to enjoy, as we have here, the fruits of our well-doing, to suffer, as we already have, according to our deserts.

Beyond question, when the enchantments of earth have all passed away and when the veil of sense no longer hangs around it, the soul will be more susceptible of joy and of grief than it is now. But it will not be the event of death that will cause these joys and sorrows. It will be the life we led before that final hour. *That* will infuse into our cup all the bitter ingredients we then taste.

Such being our position, our great concern is seen to be life. And life is a present thing ; there is nothing so important to us as the passing moments. To employ these aright, to do the very work which to-day requires of us should be our chief care. If

that be always well done, then no coming hour, not even the last that awaits us, can overwhelm us with dismay. We need no religion of fears to prepare us for a fearful moment of death. We want no agonizing of the soul to fit us for an agony of departure. We may fear other things, but death never.

We have spoken of the Christian as having passed already from death unto life. We have represented him as even now entered upon an everlasting life. Do you ask by what means this passage is accomplished ?

The first step in the transition consists in sober thought. We have been looking at things near, at the tangible and material. We must now look afar off toward the spiritual and invisible. Look, in a word, unto Jesus. Up to this hour the world would have stood by the river of death, and shivered and feared, and never willingly crossed its dark waters, had not Christ stood on the bank beyond it and beckoned us over. It is he that has given light to them who once sat in the shadow of death. He preached of the insignificance of that ghastly power to which the world had given its slavish allegiance. He met the enemy in his own person ; he trampled on his crown and rose again unto life.

In the light of Christ we must proceed to take new and broader views of God's illimitable empire. Confining our survey to this little globe, we wonder and are startled at the sway which death apparently holds over it. Let us enlarge our field of vision. We shall then see that death is but another form of

life. The animals only die to mingle with the earth, and send up through their dust other creations. Plants decay in autumn; but a seed is preserved, and a new spring brings new blossoms. God thus taketh care of all things. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without him. Why then should we, of such precious value, indulge any fear? Let us go serenely down to the grave, for so life shall come again to us.

We ought, also, to take larger views of time, duration, and futurity. An event is before us that perhaps chills and appals us. But what is it? A point, occupying an instant, a vanishing point. Can it then be fertile of all evil? "He that heareth my word and believeth," says Christ, "hath," that is, already possesses, "everlasting life." What is death then to the true believer? A dot on the infinite line of existence, a speck on the field of our spiritual vision. In the eye of sober judgment, it stands as literal truth that Christ has "abolished death"; there is nothing worthy that name in a devout man's prospects.

The Christian mind regards the final hour, — to use the language of an apostle, — as only a "departure" from this life to a better. By too much of our language on this subject, we imply that the body is the man, the living, conscious, active self. We speak of the dead as laid in the grave, as if that contained all we once knew of them. Let it be that we speak only of appearances. To how many is it a reality! How many, when they think of the de-

parted, reflect upon them as here, wrapped alive in their shroud, as it were, if they do indeed live at all. Would you avert the terror of death, reform this habit. Dwell on the body as a deserted tenement, one whose occupant is not here, but is risen. Contemplate the cold form of your friend as only an instrument lent by God for a season, to work out his salvation, but now becomes useless and laid forever aside. Think of it as of no more interest or importance to him than any other portion of earth's mass of clay. So will you begin to pass out from the iron dominion of death.

But more than all, we should cultivate the inward man. Let that grow, and soon it will counterweigh this accumulation of fears. Separate daily the flesh from the spirit. Blend as little as possible the images of life and death. Rouse yourself, by communing with God, from the sleep of the soul to a spiritual wakefulness. Turn away from all that is sensual, debasing, sordid, and sinful. Break every yoke that earth and death, those twin despots, have been so long binding upon you. Abhor iniquity; every shade of that does something to bring night and terrors and demons around us.

Fear God, because he is the living God. Fear self; weak, helpless, and hopeless of thyself alone, distrust all that thou art and canst do apart from the Father. Fear sin; it is the bane of thine existence, the blot and stain of thy fair spirit. Fear life; it is encompassed with snares. Dark often is its way; take heed lest thou stumble and perish. But death con-

template calmly, cheerfully, leaning on the anchor of hope.

Bind Christ to your heart. Be his words on your frontlet. Then shall an angel roll the stone from your tomb and let in light, and give you life, and breathe into you an holy courage, and set your feet on strong places. For Jesus Christ has said it, and eternity re-echoes the assurance, "If a man keep my sayings, he shall never taste death."

XXIII.

THE POWER OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

CHARITY NEVER FAILETH. — 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

THE idea prevails generally that charity, — by which the apostle here means simply Christian love, — is an effeminate and feeble sentiment. To say of one, that he is an amiable man, is, in the estimation of many, to pronounce him a weak man. To say that an individual loves all mankind, does not raise him very highly in most men's regard. It is not like saying that he has a powerful intellect. Nay, mere physical force is not unfrequently placed before it. The commander of armies, a Cæsar or a Napoleon, strikes the world in general as a far more powerful man than he who rules in the empire of love. It is thought well enough for children, and for the feebler sex, to be distinguished for tenderness of spirit, but that after all it is an infirmity. Power is thought by its very nature to imply a certain insensibility. The manly and the strong are lion-hearted; what have they to do with affection and gentleness? To show feeling is a weakness.

But is it indeed so? Are power and love thus adverse to each other? Does one necessarily decline in

energy when he opens his heart to the inpourings of this grace? Is amiableness always and of necessity a weakness? Are forbearance, forgiveness, and their kindred qualities sure proofs of an inferior order of character?

Incredible as the position may at first appear, I believe the opposite of this doctrine is the true one. Love, — and by this I mean not an easy, constitutional good-nature, but a mild disinterestedness acquired by effort and fostered by self-discipline, — love, so understood, and this is the New Testament sense of the word, is power. Misanthropy, hatred, enmities, retaliation, and revenge debilitate human nature. There is nothing which robs an individual of all true energy like personal bitterness; nothing so exhausts the spirit as wrath and hostility. All, on the other hand, that truly exalts and strengthens the internal might of the soul springs out of love.

Without dwelling on this abstract statement, I shall appeal, in illustration of its truth, to some of the works accomplished by this principle since the time of our Saviour. In every age, while some have failed in their efforts to extend the kingdom of Christ, others have succeeded. And what has usually been the key to this success? Why, for example, did Augustine, Oberlin, and Howard prosper in their labors? Look at the spirit of the men, and you will see; they were filled and inspired continually by love. With many this sentiment is casual, awakened only by temporary sympathies, the creature of impulse. With those just named it was a matter of

principle, daily cherished, steadily enlarged, and never, no, not by momentary failures, by ingratitude, nor reproach, nor perils, nor personal sufferings in any form, never to be quenched.

Coming down to our own age, we find numerous instances to show that "charity never faileth." Look at the seaman, once abandoned, despised, treated harshly, and given over to vice; but now how often reformed; while on shore, seated, as the Sabbath returns, not as of old in some house of vice, at the gate of hell, but in the house of God, and at the gate of heaven. Whence came this mighty change? Enmity and neglect did not cause it; it came, in many cities, but emphatically in our New England metropolis, from the labors of loving spirits. What marvels have been wrought by the melting appeals of him so well styled "the father" of the mariner. Once the insane were treated as outcasts; they were kennelled, chained, and beaten like the brutes; and then they died in the loathsomeness of idiocy or the horrors of the maniac. But now they are treated as human beings; asylums are reared for them; order, neatness, and healthfulness mark their abodes; they are dealt with in kindness. And what is the consequence? Multitudes of them are sitting, clothed, and in their right mind; they are saved by the power of love.

To what must we ascribe the success in this age of the friends of Temperance? Is it enmity to the inebriate, the old scorn and contempt of him, which has worked these wonders? Have bitterness and wrath

led on this procession of the reformers and the reformed? I cannot believe that personal hostility or an unchristian spirit ever has changed, or ever will change, the course of either the vender or the consumer of alcohol. "Nothing," said a reformed member of Congress, "that was ever heaped upon me which was abusive or untrue ever caused me to halt or change my course one iota." It was the love of an entire stranger to that individual, manifested by kind words and a gentle deportment, which was the means of his redemption from the cup.

We have lived to see an effective blow aimed at that blight of humanity, the institution of slavery. A sentiment has been at last awakened throughout the civilized world that must lead, earlier or later, to its extinction. But how has this been done? Not by the harsh language and passionate denunciations sometimes unhappily employed by the misguided friend of the slave. No, these have but retarded this noble enterprise. Read the lives of Clarkson, Wilberforce, and Channing, and you will see who they are that have really done most for emancipation. These men were cleansed of all personal bitterness, and filled to overflowing with a genuine love. Their large souls occupied the whole world; they embraced every child of God in a deep, widespread, and sincere affection. Analyze any one of the successful efforts of the day made by the more favored in behalf of the less favored classes of society, and you will find the saving ingredient is this same spirit. We owe to it the amelioration of our penal

codes, by which the criminal is punished less than formerly to gratify a vindictive disposition, and, more with a view to his own reformation. Take the example of that nature's nobleman, Isaac T. Hopper. Both the prisoner and the slave drank at his life-deep fountain of love.

Not many years since, the idea of preaching to culprits in prison was regarded with terror. When the attempt was first made at Philadelphia, the sheriff said the inmates would escape, and rob, and murder ; and he had a loaded cannon pointed towards them during the service. But Isaac Hopper, clad in the armor of love, did not fear to approach these same men with the Gospel word ; and by the majesty of gentleness he reformed and saved not a few of them.

Human life is held more and more sacred, and we now shudder at its destruction, either on the gallows or on the field of battle. To what is this great and growing change to be ascribed ? Let me present an answer by citing two illustrations, drawn from opposite quarters. The one shall be Napoleon Bonaparte the First, an impersonation of the terrific sway of military ambition when unrestrained by the power of Christ. In his triumphant career he once dazzled the world, and seemed destined to universal empire. But mark his end ; he is at length taken captive, borne to a desolate island, and there, for long years, exhibits a temper of force to rule others by millions, but not, alas ! to rule himself. And "nature herself," as another has well said, "when his final hour approached, as if determined to assert the greatness

of her work to the last, trumpeted him out of the world with one of her fiercest storms. Amid the roar of the blast and the shock of the billows, amid the darkness and gloom of one of the most tempestuous nights that ever rocked that lonely isle, Napoleon's troubled spirit was passing to that unseen world where the sound of battle never comes, and the tread of armies is never heard. Awe-struck and still, his few friends stood about his couch in tears. "The head of the army" were the last words of those agonized lips. The bystanders gazed steadfastly on that awful, kingly brow ; but it gave no further token, and the haughty lips moved no more." Such is the end of trust in a domination to be secured by unhallowed violence. It is an example of the final subjugation of man's most towering passion and pride ; it is a picture, not of power, but of mortal weakness.

Contrast with this the course and the end of a man like Fénelon. Here is one who, instead of being fired with a thirst for outward dominion, and breathing forth slaughters and wrath, has a heart filled to overflowing with love ; his empire is within. Benevolence and kindness prevailed through every word and every act of his life. And what was their effect ? His diocese was often the theatre of war, but it never harmed him. His spirit awakened the veneration even of the enemies of his country ; and hence it was, that, when villages and towns lay smoking in ruins around him, his dwellings were safe from sword and fire. And to this day his Memoir, with

his pious and humane "Reflections," is found in many a cottage of his land side by side with the precious Word of God. The warrior was weak ; his sun went down at noon : the man of peace was strong, and his star still flames on the pure forehead of heaven.

Indeed all must have seen and read enough to convince them of the power of Christian love. No man was ever disappointed on the whole who put his trust in a kind spirit. Sooner or later it is always triumphant. Enmity often fails of its end ; malice and bitterness recoil on those who indulge them. But "charity never faileth" ; forbearance melts at last the most determined opponent ; and forgiveness bears down hostility with an irresistible power.

We are apt to exclude some persons from the law of love, imagining them inaccessible to its influence. We think that they are utterly destitute of feeling, and can be controlled only by force and moved only by coarse considerations. We sometimes meet a man of so rough an exterior, and whose manners and deportment are such, that we say within ourselves, "There is one who can have no feeling whatever ; the sear leaf of autumn is not more dead than he must be to every tender emotion." But let God decide whether it is indeed so. He takes from that man a blooming child ; the event proves a shaft from above ; it pierces and divides asunder the man's heart, — yes, his heart, for he now shows that he *has* a heart. As, on the Southern plantation, out of a hard shell there comes a fabric of the softest texture,

so was it here ; out of a rough encasement God brought forth a treasure for heaven.

But, you will affirm, there are those who are assuredly past feeling. Look at the remorseless pirate, and say if he who robs and murders on the high seas can have a heart left in his bosom. Yet who is there among these creatures, abandoned and bloodstained as they are, that has no friend in this wide world ; none whom he would save and protect, and must therefore love ? But to love is to have a tender part through which one can be reached and melted into penitence. Take the most depraved man on earth ; — he shall be dissolute, a gamester, a debauchee, ready, it may be, to take human life for gold or in revenge, — let the memory of his early days come back upon him, let him think of a venerated father interceding for him at the family altar, or of a mother reading to him in his boyhood from the Book of Life, laying her hand gently on his head and teaching him to pray, — ah ! let these scenes once wake in remembrance, and, all hardened as he was, the fountains of his deep are broken up, and he yields to the very tenderest feelings of which the most affectionate are susceptible.

We should never forget that many who commit notorious wrongs, have moments when they do not and cannot justify themselves in the course they are pursuing. Conscience “is not dead, but sleepeth.” We may be instrumental in reforming almost any one, however far he has gone astray, if we will but approach him under the right circumstances and in

the true spirit. There is a monster in the sea against which it is said the harpoon and the cannon-ball even avail nothing ; but there is in him one tender part at which if he be struck he surrenders and dies. No mortal is so petrified by guilt that a token of real love, a word even of sincere kindness, if fitly spoken, might not soften and redeem him.

The truth advanced in this discourse is often manifested in the relations of communities. A signal illustration of the power of a generous spirit between nations has been furnished recently by the visit to our country of a youth of royal extraction from that land once called, in the phraseology of war, "our enemy." Our fathers met in the Revolution for battle and bloodshed ; and no epithet of denunciation was too harsh for the sovereign of England. But now the heir apparent to the same throne is received as a friend. Nay, passing over all the alienating influences, colonial and revolutionary, of a whole century and a half, and every other uncongenial element, we greeted this beardless youth with as much cordiality as if he were the promised incumbent of our own highest official position. All that could be bestowed upon him was freely and gladly given, civil courtesies, military displays, the manliness of the strong and the delicate and graceful attentions of woman, the reverence of old age and the jubilee of childhood ; and art and beauty lavished their hospitalities upon him. Truly the prophetic age of Hebrew saint and seer has come, and the lamb, docile and pacific America, lies down with that lion whose voice can shake the whole civilized world.

And now, my brethren, let us have faith in this divine principle. If we covet genuine power, this is the way to acquire it. It is not through alienations, enmities, and bitterness that a nation or an individual increases in true strength. No, these dispositions always and everywhere enfeeble the character. "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty ; and he that ruleth his own spirit, than he that taketh a city." They who give way to their passions are weak, while the strong put forth the energy of their will, — a will sanctified by and in harmony with His whose name is love, and through this inward might they repress each vindictive feeling, and become at last established in that charity "which" never faileth. No, never, it cannot fail ; it is they who put their trust in malevolence, in selfishness, passion, and pride that, in the evil hour, are shorn of their vigor. Only be filled with sincere love, be kind to all, gentle toward those who do wrong, patient, persevering, and hopeful, clinging always to the spirit of Christ, and you must and you will conquer. Hold fast to this temper, and every day you will grow in power, rising steadily in true greatness, encircled by that noble company who tread beneath their feet those scorpions of our peace, ill-will, self-exaltation, and bitterness ; and you will advance daily in dignity, manliness, and true honor, nearer to the Son, and nearer to the Father.

XXIV.

KEEPING BACK THE PRICE.

ANANIAS KEPT BACK PART OF THE PRICE. — Acts v. 1, 2.

THE condition of the Christian community in its earlier period was singularly beautiful and attractive. The multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul. So entirely was the interest of the individual merged in that of the mass, that no man said that the things which he possessed were his own ; — but, so far as needful, all things were common. For this reason, in some instances, the sordid and avaricious were tempted to join their community. Among this class were Ananias and Sapphira. Eager to enjoy the benefits of a common property, but too selfish to contribute their full share to its stock, when they had sold their possessions, they kept back part of the price. They coveted and grasped at the good, but thought to escape paying its value. The attempt involved them in a series of sins and sufferings, the end of which may not be yet.

As we read the tale of avarice, prevarication, fraud, and falsehood, and see their swift and awful retribution, we are amazed, not only at the Heaven-defying guilt of these infatuated persons, but at the folly of

their attempt. "They might have known," we say, "that their deception would be found out; and, in any case, how could they dare to utter before God so base a falsehood? How plain were the consequences of their course. If they desired the benefits of the Christian community, why did they not pay for them? Why keep back any part of the price?"

But the case of Ananias and Sapphira is by no means a rare one. The degree of their sin was indeed great; but the manner and spirit of it are seen in multitudes. We ourselves desire the privileges, hopes, and rewards of Christianity; but we are not willing to pay the full price for them.

This is true of the blessings of religion in this present life. No one can estimate our obligations to the Gospel. Begin where you will, you cannot name a single advantage or a single comfort we enjoy, that did not come more or less directly from this source. The Bible, with its inappreciable influence on the soul, the Sabbath, the opened sanctuary, the government under which we live, freedom, equality before the law, our public schools, a Christian civilization, the refinements of society, the sacredness of our hearthstone, the rewards of our industry, — begin where you will, and end as you may, — every point and circumstance of our outward or inward enjoyments must be traced ultimately to the Christian religion.

But who of us pay the full price for these blessings? The compensation which Christianity demands is this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God"

—that God from whom all these privileges and comforts proceed — “with thy whole mind, heart, soul, and strength.” “And thou shalt love thy neighbor,” thy brother who shares all these things with thee, and is bone of thy bone and flesh of thy flesh, thou shalt love him “as” thou dost “thyself.”

“No,” we reply, “this we will not do.” We will have all we can get from Christianity; we will take our share of the common stock, all the endowments and profits we can obtain, — but we will give in return as little as possible. We will love God with a part of our mind, with a part of our heart, with half our soul, and a little of our strength; but do not expect us to give the whole. We will love our neighbor, but only part of our race, and those only to a degree, as little as we can and answer our purpose. We expect our neighbor of course to love us, and that heartily; but we will not love him, — love him as we do ourselves.” And thus “we keep back part of the price” due for God’s blessing and man’s true love.

But the best effects of Christianity we cannot thus secure; it has its treasures of serene faith, peace of mind, a clear conscience, a sense of the divine approbation, and of the love and favor of Christian men. And we all desire these treasures, and doubtless expect, with more or less confidence, to receive them. But by a law of God, written on our inmost members, we cannot have the possession, — we cannot truly have it, we cannot enjoy it, — unless we pay a full equivalent.

This principle applies in our worldly affairs. When

we purchase any article, we expect to pay for it, — to pay its established and agreed price. Property, to be gained, must be labored for ; to be enjoyed, must be accumulated. The more truly it has been earned, the better does it spend, and the more happiness does it yield. Goods which have been stolen are burning coals in the flesh of the thief. An overgrown inheritance is more frequently a curse than a blessing. It usually entails idleness and ennui, if not positive vice, in its train. To enjoy the satisfactions of property, you must toil for it, — pay its full price.

It is so in the moral world. We desire the benefits of a good reputation. Every one would stand well in the world ; we would be esteemed and respected by all. But we cannot have this treasure unless we give a fair compensation for it. So much as we would have of the respect and confidence of others, so much we must pay for in character. You cannot practise dishonesty, and yet have the reputation of being strictly honest ; you cannot do mean things at every corner you turn, and yet be praised for generosity ; you cannot steel your heart against the wants and woes of mankind, and still have the name of being tender-hearted and humane. To possess in the main and at large a good name, one must be inwardly and truly good. The coin must be of pure metal ; — a base alloy will not pass ; gild it as you will, the gilding will soon wear off. Hypocrisy, affectation, and pretence are sure, earlier or later, to be detected. Morally speaking, to pass for gold you must be gold.

And do not fear, if you really deserve approbation, that your virtue will pass unnoticed. "The jewel," as another has well said, "hidden under the sand of the desert, laments not its dark and silent lot. It is concealed because it is, and not because it is not, precious. And it will one day be owned and honored; and at all events to *be* a spark of diamond is more than to be a grain of sand."

This leads me to say that we can enjoy the high zest of integrity only so far as we pay its full value. To have the satisfactions of doing right, we must do right. We cannot be conscious of uprightness and possess its joys, unless we practise daily and hourly the duties of honesty and honor. It is vain to expect the tranquil, happy frame of an honest man while we indulge in guile and secret evil. You hunger and thirst for the open countenance and the calm spirit of the upright man. Make then the efforts essential to that end; make the full sacrifice. Do not claim the possession if you keep back part of the price.

We are all anxious for the rewards of truthfulness. We wish to be believed and trusted by others, and to have the smooth, safe path before us which the truth always prepares. Yet we often forget the conditions on which alone we can tread that path. We think slight untruths, an occasional exaggeration, or a trifling misrepresentation now and then, will do no great harm. Would God we could see the sure consequences of this course! "The third part of men's lives is wasted by the effect, direct or indirect, of falsehoods." And the beginnings of this vice are

what we should most dread. O that we could see, in its fearful length and breadth, —

“What a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive.”

Ananias thought it a small matter to keep back part of the price of his possession. A little deviation from the right, — what harm in that? By no means, if he could, would he commit the great sin of fraud in the whole. But a part of the price, that he might safely withhold. Yet hence all his woes, — a lie before God, a lie before man, — the loss of his entire property, the forfeit of his life, and the added pains and pangs of a future, unmeasured retribution.

We all desire fidelity from our fellow-men. We would be assured that every man will be true to us. Nothing is more unhappy than eye-service, or kindness in one's presence and coldness in his absence, smooth words and all fair to the face, but a scorpion to the back. But we can bind others to faithfulness only so long as we are faithful ourselves. To be untrue to them, to be double-tongued, Janus-faced, hollow-hearted, and yet expect unfailing fidelity on their part, is to expect figs from thistles; to think of reaping where we have never sown.

The name of Sir Fowel Buxton had a charm once for every colored man in the West Indies. His fame was their joy; his sickness gave them each a personal pang. And why? Because he was their life-long friend and advocate. He wore himself out in their cause. On his very death-bed he began a letter

to Lord Stanley in their behalf. He made attempt after attempt to finish it; he would dictate a few lines, and then sink back in the midst of a sentence; then he would rouse himself and make a fresh effort, and so his dying lips at length completed his task.

No more favor, no more love can we have than we pay for. To win a heart you must give a heart. So deep as I plant my neighbor in my heart, so deep and no deeper will he plant me in his. Paul, in the fervor of his love, could wish himself "accursed" that he might save his brethren. And, mark his recompense: "I bear you record that ye would have plucked out your own eyes" for my sake. He gave them things spiritual, and they, with a noble liberality, gave him things temporal. We cannot pay always in kind, but in heart and in degree we can repay to the uttermost.

The law of God, his irrevocable, eternal law, is compensation. So much good for such a sum, — no more, no less. We cannot chaffer or cheapen in God's great market-place. If we want an article, we can read its mark, and that tells the exact truth. Figures will not falsify; the salesman is inexorable. Not a jot or tittle can we have in the rewards of virtue except so fast and so far as we earn them. Omnipotence itself cannot *give* a man moral excellence. The essence of the possession lies in its purchase. Character which is not bought by temptations resisted, trials endured, by toils and struggles through the burden and heat of life's great day, — character which is not so bought is not character. It

has no power, no vital force, but in the trying hour will be driven before the wind and vanish like the stubble.

The mischief and the misery of human life come from a disregard of the great law in question. "Labor for the meat that perisheth not"; "Work out your own salvation"; so runs the divine mandate. But we hope to live on carelessly and at our ease, to keep back part of the price; and yet somehow, by some mysterious process, to enter on full possession of the inheritance of a genuine holiness. We form no just conception in the outset of the magnitude of this work:—

"Fresh as a spouting spring upon the hills
The heart leaps out to life; it little thinks
Of all the thick cares that must rill into it,
And of the low places it sure must needs go through, —
The drains, the crossings, and the mill-work after."

We shall be honest, beneficent, upright before God and man, we think, of course. To amass property, we must labor early and late; to rise to distinction, power, and place, we must ply all our oars; to be a scholar, one must read, meditate, and burn the midnight oil; but to be virtuous, — why, what is more easy? We can pay any price we please, much or little; we can have virtue on our own terms. Sad delusion! Sooner will gold rain down from the skies, or books read themselves, or honors be thrust upon one without effort or desert, than Christian excellence be gathered where strivings and prayers and tears were not first strown.

He who thinks to enter the kingdom must go in

by the door. Vain is it to hope we can climb up some other way. The door of the fold is Jesus Christ; he has laid down the great rule of judgment, and we have only to accept it. Many will say unto him in the last day, "Lord, Lord, have we not in thy name done many wonderful works?" But the deeds of virtue alone will be accredited. "Depart from me," will be the mournful sentence, "ye that have worked iniquity."

Brethren, the day of judgment has already begun; we cannot pass a single day of our lives safely and happily, unless, up to the full extent of our abilities, we do the work given us by our Father. We want the hopes, promises, and rewards of religion. We want peace of mind, a good name among men, faithful neighbors, loving hearts, true friends; we want the immediate and the final favor of our God and Judge. How can we secure these many and precious possessions? We cannot beg them outright; they cannot be purloined. By no art or device can any one of them be compassed. They must be honestly and openly purchased; bought by a surrender of ourselves, mind, heart, soul, strength, unto God; bought by giving our secret and sacred affection to our brother man, by living in and for our race, helping the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, and the guilty, helping them, as we are able, one and all. Let no man deceive himself; my friend, whatsoever of true good, earthly or heavenly, you lack and desire, for that you must pay. See well to it, I entreat you, that you keep back no part of the price.

XXV.

CHRIST, THE RECONCILER.

TO MAKE IN HIMSELF OF TWAIN ONE NEW MAN, SO MAKING
PEACE. — Ephesians ii. 15.

THE great office of Christianity may be expressed in a single word,—“Reconciliation.” God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself;—bringing each separate soul to repent of its sins, accept the true atonement, and be at peace with the Father. Through Christ also he broke down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile; and thus in an important sense removed, or mitigated at least, the old estrangement between nations. And so his religion has continued, downward and onward, from age to age; in the individual heart and life, in society, in the church, and in the world, a mighty love-power. Wherever it has spread, and according as it was accepted, it has been a majestic umpire, healing alienations, diffusing harmony, and in proportion as it has been obeyed, consummating a universal reconciliation.

It effects a conciliation between faith and reason; it plants itself in the human mind, and there breaks down the high barrier so often erected between these

twain. In the earlier ages these principles were always in conflict. Superstition appeals not to the understanding, but to imagination ; to the senses, or to feeling alone. In the olden time, it is true, faith abounded ; Persia, Egypt, Chaldea, Phœnicia, Greece, and Rome had their myriads of deities. They believed with their whole soul in oracle, omen, sign, and wonder. But nothing was more irrational than their manifestations of religious principle, in whatever form they came. The New Testament promulgates a piety in the strictest accordance with reason ; it gives the understanding its rightful position in matters of belief ; although involving many mysteries, that is, things above our comprehension, it does not cloud the intellect in volumes of mysticism, nor present itself as a cabalistic book, to be understood only by the initiated. And it appeals for its interpretation, not to one faculty alone, but to all the faculties of our nature. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, and learn the sense of the whole, and just so far as we have comprehended the height and the depth of its language, and have compassed its truths and weighed its precepts, with their world-embracing motives and heaven-reaching sanctions, — we do then see clearly, that to present ourselves, body and spirit, a living sacrifice unto God, is but “ a reasonable service.”

Christianity accomplishes a reconciliation between piety and philanthropy. Human nature tends, at every period and under the most various circumstances, to hold fast one of these elements to the

neglect of the other. The part of the scribes and Pharisees, who tithed the small herbs for the service of the temple, but meantime omitted the great social virtues, justice, humanity, and fidelity, has been reenacted in all ages. Not a few have loved sacrifice rather than mercy, and have been scrupulous in every ceremonial observance, while they passed by the most sacred moral duties. Others, in their attachment to the virtues honesty, benevolence, and faithfulness, neglect the high concerns of the spiritual life. They distrust the soul, and regard piety as an illusion. But Jesus Christ represents love to God and love to man as twin sentiments. He denominates both great commandments, equal in their origin and their authority, to be obeyed with equal recompense, to be neglected on equal peril.

No more are spirituality and philanthropy to be twain. He who puts forth his hand to rebuild the old partition, and separate the love of God and the service of him in the closet, at the family altar, or in the sanctuary, from the love of his brother, — let him exalt which of these he may, — does so far forth renounce his title to the name and hopes of the Christian. Call piety the chief thing; let it be the head, and morality only the hand, we say, on the authority of the Master, that the head cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you." Piety, when set apart from moral works, soon degenerates into fanaticism or mere sentimentality; nor, on the other hand, is it enough to overflow with zeal for humanity, and give to it one's time, means, and ser-

vice, no, not though you could break every yoke, and free all nations, and all men, or bring the world into one fold of peace, or dash every inebriating cup to the ground, and loose every prisoner, and give competence to the poor, — all this, noble as is the work, and blessed as are its results, is incomplete if God be forgotten, his worship forsaken, and the glory given, not unto him, but unto mortal man. “These things,” saith the divine Son, “ought ye to have done, and not leave the other undone.”

In the same manner does Christianity harmonize an obedience to the spirit and the letter, the form and the substance. She does not reject either. There have been tendencies in every period to extremes. Now, rites and forms have been multiplied, and the main stress of the Church has been laid on ordinances and ceremonies. The outward symbol or act, the bending of the knee, the homage of the lips, was then made the great essential, the very token of the Christian. And now the reverse has been the popular doctrine. The spirit has been everything, the letter nothing. “Why make yourself,” says one of this class, “a slave to forms and rites? One may be as religious without them as with them. There is no need of joining the Church; we can be just as good out of it as in it. Why observe the communion? it is not a saving ordinance.” “I know of some of the best of persons,” you will hear it said, “who do not partake in this rite, and I know some who do, whose lives are no better than others.” “Then,” says another, “for the rite of baptism, can

I not bring up my children as well without as with it? I can see no special efficacy in it." "And then," adds a third, "I am coming to think very little of attendance at church. Cannot one be religious at home as well as in a church? Why may I not read a book, or even take a walk in the fields, or a ride, or a sail, and do myself just as much good as those who listen to the preacher?"

So would men separate the outward from the inward, and exalt the one and disparage the other. But is this the legitimate effect of Christianity? Nay, it would seem that our Saviour took especial care to make in himself, by his personal example, of these twain, the spirit and the letter, form and substance, "one new man." He was profoundly devoted to the inner man. He inculcated continually the value and efficacy of prayer; and he spent whole nights on the mountain-top, pouring out his soul to the Father. But did his intense spirituality lift him above the use of forms and a resort to the sanctuary? On the contrary, he gave himself up to be baptized of John; he prescribed a form of prayer; he was seen often in the temple and the synagogue; and it was he, this divine being, nurtured, living, and dying, in the very bosom of the Father,—it was this "Holy One," who, while observing a Jewish rite, established and himself joined in that ordinance which some of us think we can dispense with. So should it not be; rather ought we to reverence both,—regarding the sign, while we think more of the thing signified, submitting ourselves to every

ordinance of the Lord, and yet inhaling, and being vivified and sustained in our closet and in all outward circles by the God-imparted spirit.

Another great function of the Gospel is to reconcile the doctrine and the life. From the beginning, these twain have been brought into collision. There have been Christian philosophers who framed fine theories of good morals, while their characters were grossly defective; and there has been many a saint shrouded in ignorance or error. Nor is this all; not a few practically, and sometimes professedly justify this anomaly. One tells us, we are saved by faith, and so interprets that word as to mean faith alone. We must believe in certain points or articles, or our condition is hopeless. It is not what we do that avails us; we can do nothing acceptable to God. Another takes the ground that belief is entirely unimportant; no creed, no dogma, no doctrine whatever is essential; the life is the only thing that concerns us. Here we have a religion which addresses the feelings alone, and there one which makes little or no account of the feelings, and sets forth principle, duty, reason, as the only guide and hope of the race.

Now, if we look intently on Christianity itself, we shall find it permits no conflicts of this kind. Of the twain, be they theory and practice, faith and works, the doctrine and the life, or principle and feeling, Christ makes in himself one man. He requires us to search the Scriptures, to know God, and judge of the right; but he says also, "He that doeth the will of my Father shall enter into heaven"; "De-

part from me, ye workers of iniquity." If his word now is, "He that believeth shall be saved," it is now again, "They that have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life." Yesterday he magnified the value of doctrine, and affirmed that he came into the world expressly "to bear witness to the truth"; but to-day his word is, "Whosoever would inherit life eternal, let him keep the commandments." He exalts principle, and condemns those "who do all their works to be seen of men"; he extols also the feelings, commanding us to love God with the whole heart. So does he bring those great lines, which his disciples would keep divergent forever, into one grand junction. If the Bible contains, as Dr. South observes, "things to be believed, deep waters for the elephant, it contains also things to be done, shallow waters for the lamb." It calls every part of our nature into exercise. Intellect and feeling, thought and impulse, sound doctrine and rigid practice, all are brought into a beautiful harmony. Christ is, in this sense, as in another, the great Mediator, the universal Reconciler, in whom the whole man is consecrated both to God and good deeds.

Christianity, furthermore, effects a conciliation between the claims of the individual and society. It first addresses each soul as a single, isolated being. It takes him to his closet, and there points him above, and declares that every one of us must give account of himself to God; we are made personally responsible for all we do and say. The soul must walk its lonely rounds in the midnight of temptation, and

under the cold moon of a seeming destiny, and amid the chills of bereavement and sorrow. Under the sharpest pangs of conscience, and while the heart is wrung with cares and woes, alone must we watch, and labor, and struggle, and pray. So only when we hide ourselves in the pavilion of our Father, and cherish an inmost purity, and the sincerest love, can we truly serve our Lord and Master.

And yet, though thus solitary before God, we are not alone on earth. We are social beings, and as such, we are so intertwined in our moral fortunes as to be "members one of another." We are all nurtured by the same divine aliment, and breathe the same spiritual breath. The Gospel now merges the individual in the mass. We are to love our neighbor as we do ourselves; Christ breaks down every middle wall of partition whatever, and brings the whole race together. Association, union, sympathy, co-operation; we are to bind these words on our frontlet, and make them our talisman in all duty. Wherever man is found, there we have each a brother; and there our affections must flow out, and our hands must toil. Giving ourselves first unto God, we are to go forth and espouse the cause of Christ and humanity. We are to work on, every man according to his moral ability, wisely, progressive, and yet at the same time conservative, knowing that true progress leaves a solid past, from which to advance to a substantial future. We are to work on earnestly, patiently, amid the dear charities of the fireside; and then outwardly, to help the needy, to restore the

fallen, to reform the erring, enlighten the unlearned, deliver the oppressed, quell the impassioned and contentious, visit the sick, and speak peace to the sorrowing, and shed the light of a God-illuminated countenance wherever our footfall shall be heard.

And now, to present the broadest view of Christ's reconciling power, I would say that he came to bind together the Church and the entire world. History is filled with examples of attempts, — and for the greater part successful ones, — to keep religion and the affairs of this life apart. Hierarchies have been established, and synods and councils have exalted ecclesiastical authority ; and through Inquisitions, and by milder forms of discipline, they have attempted to reign over this world, and to awe rulers and people to their feet. And the world, in turn, have regarded the Church with an hostile eye ; they have excluded from active life the offices of piety, and have been sometimes led by the gloom of the Christian to banish religion from every cheerful scene, and to say practically, in business as in pleasure, " What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? " Earth, with its gains and gifts, its smiles and rewards, belongs to us. The priesthood and the sanctuary, rites, forms, and devotions, these things belong to the Church. There is the partition, and there let it remain."

Manifold have been the distinctions and divisions set up between religion and the present life. Sometimes the Pietist has renounced the world, and buried himself in a cloister ; and youth and beauty have

rudely snapped the cords of domestic affection, and pined and passed away beneath a veil black with spiritual darkness. Christians have hid their talents from society, and sought to incorporate themselves in a caste. Some for this reason have been grievously offended ; and these have come out from the church, and reviled her institutions and her ministry. The worldling takes shelter in the plea, that he does not belong to the Church. In past ages broad was the line of demarcation between religion and everything human. Christianity has sometimes been completely divorced from all that is tenderest in the affections, and purest in the life, and most decisive in its bearings, whether public or private, on the temporal condition of the race. The strong tendency, both in the individual and in the mass, has been to some baneful extreme, now to one element of character, and now to another. Piety has rushed into fanaticism ; indifference has hastened on to irreligion and unbelief ; the Church and the world have been driven on, conflicting vessels, and amid storm and darkness dashed the one against the other.

But so it shall not be always ; prophetic voices tell us of a brighter era. A day is decreed when these hostile elements shall be blended in a sweet reconciliation. Has not that day already dawned ? The secular and the sacred, is not God moving above them, and guiding each in its orbit, and giving assurance that their conjunction is at hand ? We can discern every day new signs of the spread-

ing power of Christian truth. The Gospel has left its old airy, impracticable position, and is descending into the bosom of this work-day world. It is pressing further and further into all the relations and interests of society. Its equalizing energy is removing kings from their thrones, and bringing the priest out of his stall, and proclaiming all men kings and priests. It is opening divine schools, and sending out Christ-commissioned men to teach and to preach, that God now commands all men everywhere, — high and low, rich and poor, honored and unhonored, parted in times of ignorance as by walls of stone, — to come heart to heart, and love and live for one another. Ranks and orders, fictitious titles, official pomp, and shows unchristian and baseless, are passing away. Men, no longer content with shadows, demand substance ; and merit, not mere station, is the password now. The man, what he is, not what he has, is the grand inquiry. Classes long separated by custom and condition are being joined through Christ. Hand meets hand ; the high are descending, the low coming up, to one broad level of Gospel sympathy ; the electric current flashes around and above, and that not to destroy, but to purify, unite, and save.

Be it our care to toil, and strive, and pray that the redeeming arm of Christ may stretch forth wider and wider, and we, — personally reconciled through him to God, — be so borne up, and stayed, and quickened by it as to perform generously our share in bringing heaven down to earth ; and, by joint labor

with the Father and the Son and with one another, may we help to bear earth, — a band of reconciled brothers, — up to that blessed company where there shall be no more twain, but all shall be eternally one.

XXVI.

THE IGNORANCE OF MAN.

WE ARE BUT OF YESTERDAY, AND KNOW NOTHING. — Job viii. 9.

Is it so in truth, that this noble being, created in the image of God, boasting his superiority over the mere animal, and pluming himself on his alliance with angels, knows in reality nothing? There are views of ourselves which we can never take without feeling the poverty of our highest intellectual attainments. How narrow are the limits of the finite, — those limits beyond which we cannot pass, — compared with the infinite! How little can be known by man; how much less does he actually know! Who that has separated himself, and sought to intermeddle with all wisdom, has not felt, as he journeyed from language to language, and from science to science, and saw his prospect continually enlarging, the mournful ignorance of man, and that, in one sense, “He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow”?

We have schools and colleges and associations in our cities and villages for advancement in knowledge. We assemble in these institutions to communicate one to another the things we have learned; and we

congratulate ourselves on the unparalleled light of the age. Were it not wise sometimes to reverse the picture, to consider how little we know, and inquire what reflections and what feelings our ignorance should inspire? These are the points to be contemplated in the remarks which follow.

We commence with affirming that of the natural perfections of the Being that formed him man knows comparatively nothing. Whence did God proceed? It is usual to reply, He is self-existent. But what is self-existence? Can we in any wise comprehend it? A cause in itself uncaused is manifestly beyond the human understanding. We can only say so it is, so from the nature of the case it must be; further we know nothing. Look, then, at those divine attributes,—omniscience, omnipresence, infinite power and wisdom,—words in continual use, yet who has ever fathomed their significance? They simply express a thought in our minds. They are words employed to set forth our belief that we cannot know the nature and extent of the Divine presence, knowledge, wisdom, and power. They touch a theme incomprehensible both to the philosopher, who has spent years in their investigation, and to the man who never entered a hall of science. Study does, it is true, confirm our faith in these amazing perfections; but how they exist no man comprehends. The question is as appropriate now as it was four thousand years ago, “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?” We meditate, in this

pursuit, on the faculties of man. He is weak and finite; the mighty God, we at once determine, is higher than we are. We ascend thence to angels, to archangels, and even to the exalted Son of God. At this height we hear that voice, "My Father is greater than I." Imagination fails, and, overwhelmed by our conceptions, we break forth, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

If we contemplate the past and the future, what do we know of them? Go back to the commencement of time. What preceded it? When did Jehovah command that days, months, and years should begin their ceaseless round? Think of the formation of this earth and its countless creatures; can you conceive of a period when they were not, when this world was launched into being? Yet you are equally, ay, far more confounded by the atheistic opinion that it had no beginning, and by the doctrine that inert matter fashioned itself.

Let us now carry our view forward. If the past perplexed us, what shall we say of the illimitable future? We are accustomed to speak of a period when time shall be no more. Yet what do we know of this change? We can imagine ages, centuries, thousands of years, but have we the least understanding of a crisis at which all these divisions of time shall terminate?

The events too of that future, what a sealed book is here! How painfully true is it, that, of this sub-

ject we know nothing! Think of that unseen world, toward which every swift-winged moment is bearing us onward, on how few points that concern it are we informed. This theme is emphatically environed with the unknown and the unknowable. The present life is shrouded in mystery, — its origin and its essence alike. And death, that spectral form, which from behind a thick veil reaches forth its resistless arm, and snatches away alike the lowliest and the mightiest, inexorable to our tears and our prayers, spreading around us, as our years flow on, a solitude whose echoes, though they do not or should not inspire any gloom, yet by their very vastness startle and sometimes overwhelm us, — what do we know about death, except that Christ makes it the portal of a never-ending life?

Into the dim region beyond this life the lamp of reason attempts in vain to throw its full rays. And the space illuminated by revelation is comparatively small; looking at the Bible for this purpose alone, we find very little to satisfy our curiosity on the future state. Man once hoped to live again; the wise — one perhaps in a generation — argued that there is a world to come. Jesus Christ came upon earth, laid down his life, and rose from the dead to assure *us* of a like resurrection. Now we do know that we too shall rise and live hereafter, and that we shall reap in eternity as we sow in time. But the moment we begin to dogmatize in regard to heaven and hell, — to say, for example, where the one or the other is located, or to mete out the precise doom of

our fellow-men, sending these to everlasting bliss and those to eternal torments; or when we affirm that none will be punished at all after death, or that the whole race will be restored to perfect holiness and happiness, — we forget that solemn rebuke of our Master, when asked by those inquisitive minds, whose representatives live in all ages, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” “Strive,” is his reply, — strive, and not merely “seek,” yourself “to enter in at the strait gate.” In regard to others, he would say to them, as he did to Peter when curious about the fortunes of John, “What is that to thee? follow thou me.” Indeed, our best constructed theories are, earlier or later, doomed to be baffled. How or where we are ourselves to exist no one of us can tell. Not even the day of our departure is disclosed to us. Under what circumstances we are to live another year, another day even! how many privations, disappointments, and sorrows are before us, or what joys and successes Providence will bestow on us, — the whole is wrapped in impenetrable mystery. We may hope for unchanged gladness in the days to come; we may fear reverses and griefs, but the heavens will be still overcast, and shadows, clouds, and darkness hang on our path.

Consider next our ignorance in relation to space and its occupants. Not a few die without even passing the bounds of their own land, nay, the little region of their birth. We count him an experienced traveller who has visited a considerable portion of the countries of this world. To compass the globe

is deemed by many a business worth a whole life. Yet what is this earth, with all its kingdoms and continents, compared with the empire of the universal Monarch.

Take a glance by night at the deep blue vault above. You see a multitude of glittering points. It is but a faint description of these far-off worlds to say that they are more than we can number. A late English astronomer, whose labors in this science were a theme of wonder, affirmed that no less than a hundred years were needed to survey the whole visible heavens as minutely as he had been able, with his utmost exertions, to view a small portion of this vast field. We speak of the solar system with which we are connected as if it were no inconsiderable portion of God's works. Far as the telescope has penetrated, there has been discerned a dim sentinel, who occupies more than two hundred and seventeen years in completing his lonely tour around the sun. So remote, too, is he from our great centre of light, that the sun, as seen from that planet, probably appears but a twinkling star. Yet all this is but a single system. We speak of the immensity of space; let us then in our thoughts journey on beyond this system. There is a stand-point from which all this assemblage of bodies must seem but a far-off spark. And where shall we rest? It is computed that there are fixed stars so distant that a ray of light, though travelling twelve thousand miles in a minute, would not reach us in less than a million of years. How many systems must we visit ere we arrive at the

bounds of the universe ? Has it, indeed, can it have, any bounds at all ?

But matter is finite ; each portion of it is so, and why should not the whole have likewise its limits ? Of this subject truly “ we know nothing ” ; darkness closes over our prospect. How reasonable does that language now appear, at which we were once perhaps amazed : “ I do not know,” said Newton, “ what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy playing on the seashore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me.” What a testimony to the infant ignorance of man !

But we need not soar thus high to establish our doctrine ; there are proofs of it nearer than these. Yes, in the very nearest objects we find enough to baffle our researches. We speak of natural and chemical affinities, of attraction and repulsion, of gravitation, — that all-commanding influence, — yet what do we know of these things as respects their causes and essence ? We divide material substances, with philosophic pride, into animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms, and fancy that this clears up all their abstruse points and qualities. But how much, looking minutely at the whole, do we really comprehend in regard to their nature ? It has never yet been so much as decided what are the exact boundaries of each of these kingdoms. There are substances which one man of science tells us are min-

eral, while another calls them animal. So it is with the claims of certain things which some term vegetables, but others define as capable of self-motion. Scarcely a year passes in which the learned do not contend, some for this and some for that exposition of the wonders of creation. Every day we live, if we observe closely the mighty operations around us, there are facts and occurrences to be witnessed of which we must confess we have no understanding. Turn where we will, to the humblest plant or to the meanest insect, if we but ask, How does this grow? how does that breathe and move? our inquiries are mocked; we can only say, "It is the hand of the Lord, the hand of the Lord, whose ways are marvelous, and whose works past searching out."

We have ascended to the skies, and then looked at things near us, to illustrate the ignorance of man. But a deeper mystery, if possible, is still to come before us, and that is ourselves, human nature,—what do we know of this universe within us? What can we say of its origin, its essence, and its ultimate destination? For six thousand years new systems of moral and intellectual philosophy have successively enjoyed each its day, and then passed away. The wise, like the weak, have been defeated in their endeavors to solve this great problem,—man. It is yet to be decided what are the distinguishing properties of our nature, how precisely we differ from the inferior orders of creation. Once it was said, man may be designated as a rational being; but now we have learned that some animals reason.

Nay, there are those who maintain that certain moral qualities are not confined, in the downward chain, to the human species. There have been, and still are, conflicting theories on nearly everything that concerns our intellectual and spiritual capacities.

Many subjects are now warmly agitated in this community which affect vitally the philosophy of our nature. Let phrenology prove true, — prove what its advocates claim it to be, — and it will overthrow conclusions that had for ages been deemed indisputably established. It will introduce radical changes in the modes of education, and in the employments and pursuits of our race. Or suppose a science deduced hereafter from the facts of animal magnetism, or those of “spiritualism,” it must alter essentially our views of human nature, and prove some of the past philosophies vitally erroneous. We name these things, not as believers in the novel opinions referred to, but to illustrate the ignorance of himself in which man is involved. Let not these allusions be derided; let it not be conceived that these novel speculations are idle, and that all our opinions of man are incontestably established. An inspired writer, one too who was marked by his wisdom, inquired, “Who knoweth the spirit of man?” And let us, too, acknowledge in this latter age, — one of light though it be, — that on this momentous topic, ourselves, the distinctive powers of the soul, and the essence of our faculties, we know comparatively “nothing.”

Such is the ignorance of man ; so little does he comprehend of the natural perfections of God, of the past, and the future, of the boundless regions of space, of distant worlds and systems, of things near him, and of his own nature and immortal capacities. What are the sentiments our subject should awaken ?

It should teach us humility. Who that contrasts the proudest acquisitions of man with the infinite unknown can be proud ? How pitiful in the eye of Omniscience must he appear who towers and swells with an arrogant self-sufficiency ! The Saviour of the world, he who had seen the Father, and who had with a prophet's ken pierced the solemn future, was "meek and lowly." Can *we*, then, born, encompassed, and dying in ignorance, go about to exalt ourselves ? How meagre are our highest attainments, and how narrow is the compass of our most enlarged conceptions ! Let us but see them as they are, and we must exclaim, "I know, comparatively speaking, nothing." Pride and self-consequence will then be banished from our minds.

Let us learn, in view of our ignorance, to adore that Matchless Intellect before which all is light, to which all time and space and being are clear as the noonday. While we, in the short tours of imagination, tire and faint, there is Mind which, from its inaccessible throne, goes forth from world to world through suns and systems without weariness or toil. If the contemplation of the little we can fathom kindles a veneration for his character, what

should we not feel as we reflect that these are but a portion of his ways, — that what we so admire is only the threshold of that sublime temple, in the midst of which is One who telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names, One who leadeth out these shining hosts with the same ease as he “weigheth the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance”?

Our subject should incite us to trust in God. Encircled by infirmities and full of wants, to whom shall we go for aid? Shall we lean on our own resources alone? Alas! “we know nothing”; we are groping through a land of shadows and mists. Doubt, uncertainty, conjecture, are the portion of us all. But God knoweth all things. Those judgments which to us are a great deep are to him all open, seen from their embryo to their full consummation; and God is love. Why, then, should we not flee to him, and rest upon him as the child does on its parent? Let the veil still hang on our prospect; it is enough that he formed the plan, and that a mercy boundless as his wisdom and power presides over the destinies of our race. Blessed are we, if, not having seen, we shall still believe. There are hidden things, affecting, it may be unimagined, events gathering on our path. We see through a glass darkly. But let us never forget that one thing is revealed to us: “He hath showed thee, O man! what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Let us give thanks for

this cheering declaration, and walk by its light. For the rest, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand, — that day in which faith shall be lost in sight, and we shall know even as also we are known.

XXVII.

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD IN CHRIST.

ACCORDING TO THE ETERNAL PURPOSE OF GOD, WHICH HE PURPOSED IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD. — Ephesians iii. 11.

It requires but a partial acquaintance with the world in which we live, to perceive that it presents everywhere more or less evidence, not only of a presiding Mind, but of one distinct purpose.

In the material universe we can see ever-multiplying proofs of this truth. The sun does not rise and set by accident, yesterday in the east, and to-day in the west. The seasons do not come and go with disorder, and in a manner that shows no plan, no aim, or object. Gravitation, attraction, magnetism, electricity, crystallization, heat, and light do not act in one way here and in another way there. On the contrary, all the mighty forces that operate on the spot where we now are extend over every portion of the globe ; they and all material principles and agencies are universal, unchanged, and unchangeable. The relations of time and space, the growth of plants, and the instincts of animals are uniform. All motion, too, shows a unity of purpose. In the revolutions of all moving bodies, whatever law gov-

erns the earth, governs also the worlds beyond worlds and systems beyond systems of the entire outward universe. Once it was believed that the earth stood still, while the sun, moon, and stars revolved around it. But science discovered that it was not so ; her word is : —

“ As around thy centre planets roll,
So thou, too, hast thy path around the central soul.”

The progress of modern investigation and its almost miraculous developments, though they have been achieved by the instrumentality of man, point to a higher Power, and exhibit a purpose emanating from an infinite intelligence, wisdom, and goodness. They show that there is a Being who, by the most simple agencies, is continually working out vast issues for the civilization, comfort, and happiness of man. We live in an age full of discoveries both in science and art ; but not one of these can be named that does not indicate the same high origin ; they all point to one great First Cause ; and they each manifest the same benevolent purpose.

But does the Divine Mind rest from its plans and works at this point ? Has God no other ends to promote except to execute his material law, and provide for man's outward progress and comfort ? To say this argues but a superficial acquaintance, either with ourselves, or with the Author of our being. With a clear vision and a true heart, we cannot adopt the monstrous conclusion that what we have thus far surveyed includes all that concerns our whole nature.

If now we take up the Bible, that also affirms that we have not yet reached the great summit-level of our view. That is found in the text, "According to the eternal purpose of God, which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." The mission of Christ was in harmony with the character of Him from whom he came, and who had framed and upheld the physical universe. When rightly apprehended, it shows the same great presiding Mind, the same wisdom, and the same goodness. It might have been anticipated, that, in conformity with his vast and benevolent plans, in the fulness of time, after patriarchs and prophets had finished their work, and the way was prepared, when man had sinned and sunken, and his need was the sorest, he would then and there send a messenger to restore and save the race. The wise men in the East might have been expected to look, and no wonder they did look, for a glory-beaming star, the omen of God's redeeming mercy. When the world had been trained, age after age, for this high consummation, it was meet that Jesus Christ should appear.

But why, specifically, was he sent? What was the eternal purpose of God as manifested in Christ? It was plainly this: to bring the moral world, just as he had the material world, into subjection to one great law. Christ came, — the New Testament being judge in the case, — not to save this or that portion of the race arbitrarily, nor yet to save the whole race unconditionally, but to restore the erring and wandering child to his Divine Father, to bring him into

fellowship with all his brethren, and into harmony with himself. Or, to express the whole in one word, Christ came to bring every living soul to obey the spirit-law.

This was "the eternal purpose of God"; and let it lead through whatever paths it may, whether they be called faith, or works, repentance, newness of heart, or the Christian life with its beginning and progress, — and these are all essential, — the grand termination of the whole is submission to the moral law of God. Man is represented in the Bible as a sinner, that is, as having transgressed the Divine commands. He has unbound himself from the Father, and religion is intended, as the word signifies, to rebind him. He is a prodigal son; he has abused the goodness of his Divine Parent; he has violated his injunctions; and by unhallowed desires and guilty deeds, by self-indulgence, to the disregard of his race, he has alienated himself from God. To reclaim the lost, to melt the impenitent, to bring his loved offspring back to his own bosom, this was the eternal purpose of God.

Take now this thought with you, and go, with the Bible in hand, out into the visible world, and all nature seems to respond to the great truth in question. Her powers and her processes are not now simply material things; they are gifted with a moral significance; and they address themselves to the spirit that is in man.

Who has not felt, as he walked abroad in some better hour, and mused on the glorious world around

and the more glorious world within, that the very design of the outward universe must have been to mirror forth the spirit-world? When we go from our deepest communings with Jesus Christ into the midst of God's majestic works, everything seems intended to illustrate his religion. Indeed, the Bible seldom describes spiritual things in literal and prosaic terms. It makes the whole universe, by comparison, contrast, personification, and all the analogies within reach of the imagination, contribute to its mighty theme. Take as an instance of this that emblem employed so prominently in the Apocalypse, — the flowing streams.

It is worthy of note, that the Scripture scenes are frequently laid within the purlieu of rivers. The garden of Eden was watered by a river; and this, again, was composed of four tributary streams. On one of these, the Euphrates, lay Babylon, the chief of the heathen cities of the Bible, mistress of two large rivers, which bore on their waters her religion, her philosophy, her civilization, and her language. We recall at once the realm of Egypt, illustrious for the birth and sojourn of Moses, who dwelt by that renowned stream, whose mysterious birthplace Julius Cæsar "would fain," he said, "have quit his tedious wars to reach." Dear to all the Christian world is the Jordan, its waters hallowed by the baptism in them of our Divine Master, and along whose banks he healed the sick, and proclaimed the glad tidings of faith and salvation.

Every part of the earth is venerable, — the vast

ocean, image of eternity ; the wide-spread plain, the graceful valley, wood, lake, and mountain. But what were they all without the noble river ? No landscape satisfies us if destitute of living and moving waters. Majestic is the mountain, and yet we always ask for some river to lave its giant foot ; grand is the plain, but how much fairer if it be parted by a richly-fringed stream. And the valley needs this accompaniment, studded by tree and shrub, and bearing on its tranquil breast the impress of overhanging woodland and beetling hill.

All other portions of the globe, too, are more or less silent ; when they have filled the eye, they have done their utmost. Not so the river ; to it alone,—if we except the ocean, born, we may almost say, at least sustained, through its collected gifts,—belongs the power of entrancing the ear. The sea has its music, sublime, and sometimes thrilling. But who does not know the superiority, in some of its utterances, of the many-voiced river ? All day long it pours forth its melodious strains, and on every key, and to every air that heart can crave. In the great sanctuary of nature, the uncounted choir of streams, brook and brooklet, cataract and cascade, river and rivulet, are uttering psalms of praise.

And what prayers, too, they offer up daily ! now of supplication to God when he is withholding the early or the latter rain ; and now of thankfulness as he opens his upper fountains and fills their pleading channels. Nor is this all ; the rivers are a company of preachers. How many sermons they weekly

deliver ! Spring, autumn, and summer, they preach with the tongues of men and angels. Their mounting waves, and overflowed banks, and sometimes desolating sweep, declare pre-eminently the power of God. It is he, who, in the beginning, "did cleave the earth with rivers"; and now, as he pours out his upper treasures, ten thousand little streams rush down each hill-side, and dance through the meadows. He causeth the cataract to leap from its heights, and "the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." See where, age upon age, the torrent-stream has forced its way through the crowded rocks, and sprung into its basin, eddying eternally round, wearing away the stones, and leaving a smooth masonry behind it to tell of gone centuries of its stern work ! Stand by Niagara ; watch it as it throws itself, full of foam and frenzy, into that hungering whirlpool ; stand there, and mark that miracle daily repeated, and you cannot but veil your spirit before its almighty Creator.

And now, who shall say that the power which acts thus stupendously in nature cannot, or does not, by his Holy Spirit, move and sway the human soul ? If "the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the river of water, and he turneth it whithersoever he will," why should we with sceptic pride exclude him from our own hearts ? Why deny that he can answer our secret petitions, and mould, and regenerate the sinner ?

The river preaches also of the mercy of God. It tells us that when our sins stand up thickly around

us, we should never despair, never distrust the forgiveness of our Father above; for, in the desert of our guilt, no sooner do we confess and turn from our iniquities, than the streams of his love break out for us.

“When Thou smilest,
Then my troubled heart is brightened,
As in sunshine gleam the ripples
That the cold wind makes in rivers.”

Did God confine his loving-kindness to the days of old? Was it Psalmist and Prophet alone who saw or could proclaim his compassion? Or shall we restrict this gift to the times of the Saviour and his Apostles? Nay, God is still living; even now he visits the earth and waters it. We may to-day drink of the river of his pleasure, and if we open our hearts he will pour on us those streams which make glad the city of God.

We may see in the flowing waters an emblem of human life. It begins like the river, a silver thread, slender and weak, starting on consecrated heights; it flows on through childhood and youth, its banks ever widening. On and on it rolls; in manhood, a broad and deep river, the ripple swollen to rapids. Changes come,—we are thrown over dread falls; old age has come,—we have crossed the final bar, and blent our life-waters in the ocean of eternity.

How fitly, too, these diversified streams symbolize the complex and varied characters among men. Here wisdom moves calmly on, its smooth, deep waters never turned aside by the chance obstacles

that fret and delay others ; there some bustling, restless spirit is imaged in the wild Ammonoosuc, chafing, foaming, now rushing against the uplifted stone, and now ruffled by some projecting log or bit of driftwood. This man began life like the upper waters of our Connecticut, rushing down precipices ; but in middle life, as the stream nears its ocean-end, he is sedate and staid. The men of no depth are shallow waters, that bubble over the rocks and fill the whole region with noise. The sage and thought-laden steal along, so gentle and quiet that none admire, or wonder, or perhaps observe them. Yet " their peace is like a river " ; and often " their end has a glory like the flowing stream."

The river is a preacher of cheerfulness and tranquillity. Sometimes, indeed, looking on its waters, we see only fitfulness, or moods capricious and sulken ; and again we witness tokens of a boisterous mirth. But ordinarily the majestic river rolls serenely on, dignified and composed, its descent so gradual that it finds time to wind leisurely hither and thither, meandering at will, bending the long " ox-bow," going up and down a half-score of miles to advance perhaps but one ; like the time-worn man who walks in and out among his wonted neighbors, thanking God for a green old age.

To-day we have a sermon on purity. Seldom can we see anywhere a perfect transparency,—in few latitudes does the atmosphere present us this gift ; but in many a calm-flowing stream the angels show us " a pure river of water, clear as crystal." Happy

for us if it mirror a like purity in our own breasts, and help us to open them to that Holy Spirit which cleanseth from all iniquity; but alas for us if, instead of this, we reflect the stains of temptation, our hearts and lives having become turbid with evil thoughts, and laden with the feculence of sin.

Where else can we find stronger enforcements of a Gospel humility? The proudest river on earth,—Amazon or Missouri,—is, after all, a most dependent creature. It may boast its long course or its deep treasures before God and man; but let the skies keep back their liquid donations, let every brook, rill, and tributary along the valleys, on the mountain heights, and in the deep, withhold their contributions, and the haughty river would waste away and perish. What hast thou, O man! which thou didst not receive? Why then glory in these things as though thou didst not receive them?

That modest stream which has hid itself in the forest, and lifts up a gentle murmur in its seclusion, informing the ear only of its course, or peering quietly through the steep wood by your road-side, preaches eloquently the Christ-taught doctrine,—a doctrine unheeded amid the shows and shams of this world,—“He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

If I would inculcate stability of character, I should lead my pupils to the side of some ancient river. There, while rocks crumble, and hills are worn away, and forests bow to the woodman's axe, we should see that noble stream flow determinately on. And so

will he whose sentiments and affections have been quickened by the Divine life move through the earth, steadfast in the right, true to God, and true to man.

Yes, and what better incentive do we need to labor, industry, and perseverance than the never-tiring river? On and on it flows, in the darkness and in the light, disheartened by no obstacles. From every fall it springs up and presses the more earnestly forward. Through seed-time and harvest, through summer and winter, it pursues its great journey. If heat and drought check its course for a time, it soon receives fresh supplies, and starts onward with renewed vigor. Nor, though bound on its surface by icy chains, or loaded by snows, does it remit its tasks, but down in its deep places continues its unimpeded course.

Nor do rivers move on with a barren uselessness. They carry fertility in their waters; their banks are laden with richness; and the broad intervals reflect through the deep grass and the golden grain a tribute of gratitude. What treasures, too, do they bear on their bosom toward distant lands and foreign marts. By them, aided with a spirit-power elaborated from their own waters, we are floated along from village to village and city to city, sometimes in palace-like mansions. Nor may we forget the ten thousand wheels that move the multitudinous mills, which build our habitations, and feed and clothe our bodies. Indeed, were our rivers and all minor streams to combine and stop their courses, commerce,

manufactures, the mechanic arts, and through them every branch of human industry, would on the instant stand palsied and dumb. And we also "are members one of another"; no individual can fold his arms, and let his brain slumber, and cease to "do good, and communicate" to others, without arresting, so far as his individual case can do it, the mighty machinery of human progress, of human subsistence, and life.

And consider the influence of a Christian faith and a corresponding character. "He that believeth on me," said Jesus Christ, "out of him shall flow rivers of living water." And so it is: it gives us joy to mark the course of a truly Christian man. As the fair stream charms our eye by its manifold hues and tints, and delights us by its diversified movements and evolutions, — now moving calmly on like some princely ship, and now wheeling and curveting like the noble steed, — so are we interested in every varied manifestation of human traits and qualities. But if what we witness is pure, generous, and in the image of the Father, then is the prophecy fulfilled, "A man becomes a river of water in a dry place." Faith in Christ is eminently diffusive; practical goodness descends like the soft dew and the gentle rain, making green virtues spring plentifully up wherever it moves.

Few sounds are more impressive than that of the rapids and falls of a mighty river, especially when heard at midnight. They fill us with sublime emotions, and lift the soul, as far as nature can do

it, toward a reverence for Him who pours these waters from his hand. But far more impressive is the voice of those "living waters" which flow from Christ and his Gospel. When we go from him refreshed by their influence, every object in nature is arrayed in new beauties and gifted with an unaccustomed power.

The sky, spread like an ocean hung on high, is the dome of God's vast temple; earth is one grand cathedral, its mosaic pavement made for the bending worshipper. The clouds drop tears for mortal grief, and the gentle dew would soften us to repentance; the falling snows symbolize a Christian purity of heart; the forests bow in adoration, and the winds chant sublimest hymns. Every mountain-top was reared only to lift us nearer to God; every flowing stream is poured from his boundless hand, and the gurgling brook sings his praise. Fertile lands reflect the beneficent smile of the Father; and every tiny flower sends up each morning its fragrant incense to Him. The very deserts, gemmed always with islets of green, are a framework to set off some picture of the Divine Artist. The great deep is no longer a dreary blank, but it looks lovingly up to its Author and Controller; and the waves no sooner touch the shore, than they kneel in prayer. Summer and winter, springtime and autumn, are to the spiritual eye no dull routine, no empty pageant, but

"The year leads round the seasons in a choir
Forever charming, and forever new,
Blending the grand, the beautiful, the gay,
The mournful, and the tender, in one strain."

And, not the Bible alone, nor nature alone, but our own experience also, is divulging “the eternal purpose of God.” If there are laws written on the page of creation, so is there a law inscribed on our inner man. Day upon day its bright lines flash on our view; we can, and we do sometimes see that we were made for one ultimate end alone. We are allowed — we were intended, if you please to say it — to enjoy with moderation the pleasures of sense. But that is not the final purpose of our existence. We are allowed to accumulate property, and to become rich, if we can do it, — as one certainly can, by sagacity, industry, and economy; but we were not made to be rich. It is right that we seek power over others, so long as we use it aright, and that we desire approbation, that of the pure in heart. Still these things are not the main object for which we were created. That lies deeper, far deeper than either or all of these acquisitions. And, difficult as they may be to gain, this is harder than them all. And what is it? What is found experimentally to be the great and “eternal purpose” of Him who gave us the boon of life? It is to know and serve him, to follow the light within us, watching well that it never become darkness; it is to expand our affections, loving, and doing good as we are able to every living soul.

Now it is not until we come to see, and believe, and act according to this great truth, that the primal work set before us by God and Christ is being truly accomplished. The ancient sphynx sits by the way-

side of life, and propounds to each of us her fearful enigma. If we can answer it, then all goes well with us. If we read the law of God, and yield ourselves to it, then our course is onward, full of success and full of joy. We may, and we shall, still often err and sin; but when we fall we shall not lie still in despair, but shall rise again, repent of our sins, and go resolutely forward. Sorrows may come; dear ones may be called away; parent, child, bosom companion may be taken. Our Father may present us the cup of bereavement and desolation to anguish; but our grief will not be without solace. There will be "light on the dark river." We shall look forward to that land where partings are unknown, and where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

The eternal purpose of God, so tender, so elevating, so sublime is it! And now, why is it not fulfilled in us all? Why is there this mournful chasm between our capacities and their glorious design, and our achievements? To see the wide space that separates the actual from the ideal may well fill us with pain, ay, with amazement. To see God's high purposes in the material universe so beautifully accomplished,—all its mighty movements proceeding in obedience to his behests,—and then to look on man, and think to how fearful an extent it is true that creation, in all its grandeur and loveliness, utters no spirit-sound in his ear, kindles no divine fire in his eye, wakes no pure and deep love in his heart,—this is sad indeed. And with how many of us the account stands precisely thus. The heavenly spheres

yield themselves lovingly to the God who framed and upholds them, but we do not. We repine at his dealings with us ; we would fain change his purposes ; we try to make sense, not the soul, the end of our being. We want to substitute gold for goodness, to dethrone him, the eternal God, and set up in our hearts fame, praise, or power in his stead. We do not steadily resist temptation, and so make it, what he intended it should be, a means of virtue, but we yield to its threats or its charms. Trials, changes, and sorrows are not accepted as his friendly discipline ; they do not subdue us by their stern ongoings, but they often leave us in a strange stupidity ; if, indeed, they do not harden our hearts and drive us further from his bosom than ever, further from love and duty and a sweet and humble and saving piety.

And that is not all. We are not yet in harmony with our fellow-men. It was “the eternal purpose of God” the Father, — who can doubt it ? — that his whole family, all nations, all individuals, should live together as one. As in nature, so in humanity, he designed that all things should influence all other things beneficently, and the mighty whole move forward in mutual service. Every meridian on the globe was to be a starting-point of love, every parallel of latitude to be drawn by the angel of peace, each degree of longitude to be a bright line of Christian brotherhood, and each minute and each second of this grand measurement were to be covered over with friendly commerce and social cordialities and domestic kindnesses. Alas that this benignant decree

is so resisted by man, and that we all have so often, in one way or another, allowed a leaden indifference, if not enmities, alienation, and selfishness in its Protean forms, to frustrate his purpose !

We want only a recognition of his law and a self-subjugation to its power, to introduce a perpetual harmony in our own breasts. This done, all our faculties would receive their rightful culture. The intellect, stored with good knowledge, would then, in the sanctity of faith and a conscious responsibility to its Author, lay its deep treasures meekly at his feet. Our affections would rest tranquilly on the Father ; and conscience, no more a dread remonstrant alone, resisted and often wearied into silence, would with a divine majesty reign over our passions, quell our lusts and appetites, and diffuse a glad light over our whole earthly walk.

It has been said that "music is an atmosphere of reconciliation between all minds, and a medium between our minds and the universal" ; that it is "an outlet of escape from this whole element of opinions, differences, and contradictory views and interests ; a promise and a foretaste of a better world, a language of a deeper consciousness and of emotions which seek an answer and a home beyond this life." Such is religion, — pure religion, the gift of Him who made us, not for inward rebellions and strifes, not for disquietude and selfishness, but for a love that should girdle our entire being, and for a life which should assure us that truth and goodness, and all the high ideals and aspirations of the soul, point to

realities; and that, in the final analysis, all things else are but "phantom lures," dissolving views, shadows, and illusions.

It was in conformity to these inward yearnings and testimonials that out of the bosom of an infinite mercy the Father sent his dear Son, the image of himself, the resplendence of his glory, as if to say, "though deaf to nature's call, and resisting or disregarding my providential messengers, 'they will reverence my Son.'" But him how many of us practically reject! We do not, indeed, professedly turn from him; we perhaps say to him, "Lord, Lord," and imagine ourselves his followers. But with an inquisitorial strictness he lays down the law, "Keep my commandments." This is the grand criterion: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Are we so doing? Have we bowed to his authority, yielding him the glad homage of an ever loyal heart? Is he enthroned king of our interior realm? Have we consciously given ourselves up to the control of his religion, its world-broad principles, its divine affections, its transforming life? The wide universe asks if we thus regard "the eternal purpose of God" concerning our particular selves; Jesus Christ repeats the interrogatory; and the Spirit waits for our reply.

XXVIII.

SALVATION BY GRACE.

BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES; IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.—Ephesians ii. 8.

THE Christian would stand in need of few things more than a correct apprehension of the language just read. The word “grace” occurs frequently in the Scriptures, and is employed largely in the Christian world. What is its true signification? Let us try to lay aside all human interpretations and preconceived opinions, and look directly at its Scriptural meaning. “By grace are ye saved,” — to whom were these words addressed? Paul, who uses them, is writing to the Gentiles of Ephesus, who, he affirms, had been “dead in trespasses and sins.” But he tells them that God, notwithstanding their ill deserts, is now sending them the Gospel of Christ. And on what ground does he do it? They are to be saved by grace; and grace means simply favor, and is here contrasted with merit and reward.

He shows also that in this respect they are placed on a level with the Jews. They had gloried in the law of Moses, a law of ceremonial works; on that ground they claimed salvation for what they had

done as Jews. Paul affirms that in Christ Jesus there will be no distinction of this kind ; by grace alone must both Jew and Gentile hope to be saved.

The principle here involved is one of universal application. It is addressed to us in the nineteenth century with the same truth and force as it was to the converts of Paul. We desire, as they did, to be saved. But we cannot merit this great boon ; by no works whatever, ceremonial or even moral, can we lay God under obligation to ourselves. Though we spend our whole lives in his service, we shall not earn his present and everlasting favor ; no one can be profitable to the Almighty. There is no moral storehouse where we can accumulate good deeds, to be brought forward hereafter as proof of our great deserts. On the contrary, the most devout believer, and he whose life has approached nearest that of the Saviour himself, if they see and feel their true position, will come at last with unfeigned humility and lay their best deeds at the feet of their Lord, and confess, "I have done only that which was my duty ; if I am saved here and hereafter, it will be by the favor of my Father in heaven, by his unmerited and free grace. My only plea is, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'"

Do I not meet your own feelings, brethren, when I say that in no thoughtful hour are we disposed to present ourselves as worthy the kingdom of heaven ? And we are ashamed to reflect, that when we have been touched by a sense of our demerits, our contrition has been so evanescent. Under the smart of

guilt we have perhaps poured out the fervent petition, "This only once forgive." But how soon was that vow broken! Nothing is more bitter than the review of our reiterated and inexcusable relapses; no prayer so rings the knell of all hope for unsullied purity as the sorrowing cry, "Forgive my vain repentances." Time and again the proud fabric of high resolution has rocked and fallen before the gales of temptation. We must bid adieu then to every expectation of faultless excellence, and supplicate our Father with the penitent utterance: "'Forgive my faults, forgive my virtues too.' By thy grace, if at all, I must be saved."

But now perhaps doubts will spring up, "Can we trust the grace of God? Will he, indeed, after so many and such excuseless sins as ours, grant us his forgiveness?"

We look on the course of nature, and we see there no provision for mercy. Nature is all law; it never changes nor turns aside, but holds inexorably on, the same dread avenger. And in the material world there is no need of forgiveness, for there is perfect obedience to law. But man violates the Divine commands; and except he can be forgiven, — so far as hope and peace are concerned, — he must perish. Oppressed by this insatiable want, he craves some assurance that God, his Judge, is a merciful as well as just Being. The entreaty of the human heart is that the apparent frown of God — seen by the savage, seen always in the dimness of unilluminated nature — may be exchanged for a token of love.

This prayer has been heard and answered by the Father. He sent his beloved Son, and gave in him full proof of his pardoning love ; through Jesus Christ he showed the riches of his grace. No longer appearing severe, strict, and relentless, he showed a readiness to cancel the old debt ; he came forward with the tenderness of a Father, and provided a way of escape from sin, and reached forth his arm to draw the sinking soul up to himself.

Now we can reconcile these two phases of stern nature and a relaxing mercy only by one solution. It is true, on the one hand, as the Bible says, that " God will reward every man according to his works," a truth strikingly illustrated by the parable of the pounds, in which each of the ten servants receives in proportion to the use he makes of his pound.

But it is equally true, in another aspect, that all who are finally accepted of God, be it a few or the whole of the race, will be received alike by the unbought mercy of their common Father. In Christ's parable of the vineyard, the laborers entered on their tasks at various hours of the day ; but while each did all the work he could, the earliest did not enough to earn, and the latest not so little as to forfeit, the kind consideration of their lord. The two parables are thus each the complement of the other, teaching, as has been well said, " on the one hand, that the gifts of grace are equally bestowed, and are to be received alike in humility of heart, and on the other, that there are various stages of Christian progress,

depending on the use that is made of the grace given." On the one hand, the humble spirit, receiving the gift as of grace, is contrasted with the proud, asserting its own merits; and on the other, a self-acting zeal is opposed to a selfish inactivity.

The slothful servant, regarding his lord as hard and austere, was afraid to trust his word, and so hid his talent in the earth. And too often *we* lose our confidence in the faithfulness of God; we do not really believe he will be as good as his word; and in this sense it is clearly true that God will reward us according to our deeds, accepting the righteous, not because they have earned salvation, but because they trusted his promises to those who give him their heart and their life.

When we are led, by sickness, bereavement, and crosses, to look steadily inward, conscience becomes sensitive; our own works appear poor and mean; and the soul lifts itself up, like some bleak mountain, cold and desolate and barren. And now the law ceases to be our hope, and the Gospel whispers to us of light from above. Golden clouds come down to the mountain-top and moisten its stunted vegetation; the dews of his gratuity fall by night, and the showers of Divine grace descend along its sides; and the streams of God's love trickle down to the valleys; the sunbeams of his forgiveness play over the flinty surface; and here and there the verdure of a conscious peace and the beauty of a reconciled heart give earnest of that day in which the faithful shall be "from grace to glory led."

We all, more or less strongly, crave an assurance that when we repent of and forsake our sins they are forgiven by God. It is this assurance furnished by the Roman priesthood which binds the Catholic to his form of faith. We do not want what we deem his errors of ritual and administration; but we do want the very same confidence he has in his case that our sins are forgiven. And provision has been made to meet that want, both in Revelation and the deductions of experience.

We have it first in the express language of the Bible. It is foreshadowed in the Old Testament, where we are told that the Lord is a God of mercy, that he keepeth "mercy for thousands," "forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin"; it is taught by prophet and priest, by seer and saint; the Psalmist breaks forth in the grateful and confiding strain: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." But it is emblazoned on the New Testament, shining out on every page of it: "If we confess and forsake our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." "Him (Christ) hath God exalted to give forgiveness of sins." The express object of the coming of Christ is said to be, "to turn men from darkness to light, that they may receive of God the forgiveness of their sins."

And this is not all; we have the example of Christ himself to show the validity of this doctrine. He received power from the Father to forgive sin, and, in one instance at least, he did it directly. His

language to the penitent offender was explicit: "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." And what was his own spirit? What his prayer for his enemies, when they nailed him to the cross? "Father, forgive them." And that cross,—who can look upon it, who can pass on through the life of Christ, covered over and permeated as it is with self-sacrifice, to his death, endured "that he might bring us to God," and still waver and doubt, still fear, lest, while the image of God was all love, compassion, and forgiveness, the original, and he too our own Father, may possibly, however penitent we may be, lay up our transgressions against us, and compel us through the eternal ages to drag on the ever-lengthening chain of an unmitigated penal retribution?

Furthermore, we may be assured of the forgiving grace of God by the lessons of our own highest experience. Did you ever forgive an erring brother? If you have, how can you question the mercy of God? Spontaneously, I think, the moment we can truly say, "I pardon my guilty fellow-man," there springs up the interrogatory: "Is God less merciful than I am? How can I hesitate on that point? I must say, I know God too has forgiven him." You, father or mother, who ever folded to your heart a penitent child, must feel that our Father in heaven can and does forgive us. Have you ever enjoyed the luxury of freeing your own mind from a conscious burden of offence against another by confessing it to him, and been met by a frank and noble acceptance of that tribute? Then, in the language

of a master spirit of the age, you know that "such moments are the dawn of a better hope ; the merciful judgment of a wise and good human being seems the type and assurance of God's pardon " of us.

And now we return with new confidence to the strong language of the text, " By grace are ye saved, through faith " ; yes, we can now see and believe in the grace of God. Verily, it was an abounding mercy that sanctified and sent into this world One whose doctrine is full of grace and truth,—whose precepts overflow with love,—whose own life was radiant with gentleness, meekness, and forbearance,—and who breathed forth that unspotted life in agony, to bring us to the Father.

" By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves " ; truly, man could not save himself ; he needed a power beyond and above his own ; and when that power was put forth in Christ, every dictate of truth and every impulse of honor calls for the prompt acknowledgment, " It is the gift of God."

Why, what have we that did not come from him ? Our infant home, that dear mother's love and care and toils and tears,—that honored father's guardian interest and guiding affection and wisdom were " the gift of God " ; — the good lessons that we learned by the fireside and in the school-room, the companionships we formed, and friendships cemented and hallowed by youthful fervor and meridian memories, were " the gift of God." From his hand came the precious Bible, our monitor in childhood, our beacon-light in age ; and health to enjoy and strength

to labor were "the gift of God." And this bright and blessed world, with its enamelled landscapes, its glorious sun, its serene moon, and its peerless star-crown, — all the riches of the bursting bud and the June rose and the melting pear and the juicy peach, — the splendid panorama of the green fields and the blue heavens and the sparkling streams and the hoary ocean, — all are "the gift of God."

And now, shall I open the New Testament and say *there* is something which I can procure of and for myself? Shall I go to God and say, "I have earned my salvation; pay me that thou owest"? For it plainly comes to this, that if we are saved, in any high and true sense, entirely by ourselves, then we are not "under grace," but, like the old Hebrew, still "under law." To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace but of debt. "To him that worketh not," that is, does not bring forward his works as a claim upon God, "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly," that is, helps him to be just, "his faith," his confidence in God's mercy through Christ, "is counted for righteousness." To be under law is to be rewarded or punished on our own merits alone. To be under Christ is to submit ourselves to that Gospel which was bestowed freely on us by God, and all whose regenerating energies, sublime disclosures, and precious hopes and promises, are the gift and gratuity of God. He who has faith in Christ is thus saved, not of himself, not by his own deeds alone, not by the law of Moses or any other law, but by believing in him who

was sent for our salvation by the free grace, the undeserved favor of God.

I anticipate the objection to the doctrine of this discourse, that it makes too little account of man's part in the work of salvation, and ascribes everything to God. But so, in one sense, did Paul ascribe everything to God ; and yet he did not make light of good works. "The grace of God," said he, "which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain," that is, did not make me indolent, boastful, and trust to faith alone. "But I labored," he continues, "more abundantly than they all." "Yet" — he checks himself, — "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Paul was never idle ; he exercised himself to have always "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men"; he was a good, practical, earnest, and toilsome Christian. And we too must labor ; there is a condition whose fulfilment is necessary to the completion of God's work in us. Assuredly, if we slight the obligations of good morals, if we defraud in our dealings, if we are harsh and censorious in our judgment of others, if we give way to passion and appetite, and love the world and the things of the world, then we shall find the grace of God will have been given us in vain.

Indeed, we cannot prove thus remiss with any just conception of the nature and import of Christian salvation. In what does it consist ? Not in the mere removal of an outward penalty by God, we remaining passive. To save from this was a part of

his purpose, it is true, but not the whole, nor yet the most important part. His plan was to save man from sin ; and sin is a greater evil than punishment. To reform the guilty does not at once indeed absolve him from the penalty due for his past offences. But it does save him from the suffering which must have followed his continuance in guilt for the future. Hence, to prevent the need of forgiveness is far more than simply to forgive sin.

Then, too, salvation by grace does not preclude the necessity of turning away from our iniquities. The promise of God's mercy is to those who confess and forsake their sins. No view we can take of the conditions of the Divine mercy excludes the call for repentance and reformation. We must be saved, that is, delivered from our sins themselves, before eternal justice can obliterate their dread consequences. So that while our forsaking them does not of itself entitle us to, or purchase their pardon, we cannot hope to be forgiven unless we do forsake them.

So, too, in regard to the work of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the soul. The Spirit acts where the truth has been made known ; not without human means and efforts, but in accordance with them. Hence, while we admit and recognize constantly the Divine agency in its operation on the will, heart, and life of the sinner, we contend still that he is obliged to act as if his salvation depended on his own exertions alone.

Brethren, I believe the view taken in this sermon one of the last importance to the interests of religion

in our own day. I have no confidence in any system of belief which so teaches "the doctrines of grace," as they are sometimes called, as to make Christian morals an unessential or subordinate concern. But neither do I believe in a system which cuts off this great branch, — this trunk may we not say? — the grace of God. Where is the denomination that truly prospers which does not do it by placing this truth, where it belongs, in the foreground of its beliefs, experiences, and operations? The grace of God, — it is the root of efficacious prayer, public and social, nay, of all true private prayer. It is a spring of zeal to every sect that clings to it, call them "Orthodox" or Methodist, or call them Universalist. The great underlying power in each case is their reliance, not on themselves alone, but on a faith and a grace which they verily believe are "the gift of God."

Let no false doctrines connected by others with this truth close our minds and hearts against it. If Christ did indeed come as a pure expression of the overflowing mercy of the Father; — if man did not originate our holy faith, nor purchase the effusions of the Holy Spirit, nor raise up its noble army of defenders and martyrs; nay, if not one of us called himself into existence or can sustain his own being without aid from above; if we must confess our dependence on a Higher Power, and look to Him for every outward thing, — why should we not perceive our obligations for each spirit-treasure, and trust him for the bounty of salvation? May the goodness of God lead us to repent of our sins, and recognize and accept his grace in Christ our Saviour.

XXIX.

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION.

WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING;
FOR IT IS GOD WHICH WORKETH IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND
TO DO. — Philippians ii. 12.

THE Bible, in so many respects the book of wisdom and excellence, is in nothing more so than in its striking parallelisms, contrasts, and balancing of divine truths. In its treatment of the great subject of salvation, now we are told, “By grace are ye saved, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God”; and then, as if to counteract the danger of a reliance on the unconditional mercy of God, we are taught that “He will render to every man according to his works.”

Human theologies are disposed to rush to extremes; one contending, for example, that we are to be saved wholly by faith; another, that all we need is good morals. But the Bible never carries any theory whatever to this unreasonable length; it maintains between all the principles of belief and practice a strict equipoise. So it is in this vexed question of salvation by faith or grace, and by works. Fasten your attention on one class of passages alone,

and it would seem that we have nothing to do but to believe. "Justification by faith," the great theme of Luther, has clearly a broad foundation in much of the language of Scripture. But it is equally explicit in its reiteration of the imperative necessity of works. "Labor for the meat that endureth to eternal life";—"Strive to enter in at the strait gate";—"Seek, and ye shall find";—and to crown all we have the text, "Work out your own salvation."

What is meant by this language? Not certainly that we can earn salvation by our own merits; for both in its inception and its progress it is manifestly the gift of God; not either that we can in any way gain it by our independent, unaided efforts. But this, I suppose, is meant; while of ourselves we can do nothing, he who sincerely strives, looking to God for his helping Spirit, will certainly be saved; and on the other hand, he who does not labor, seek, strive, has no promise of salvation.

"Work out your own salvation," this clearly implies that, while it is the gift of God, we must hold out our hand and receive the gift. We have something to do in the case; we are not to stand still and expect God to pour down on us the showers of his grace. The old Antinomian error was this: "Good works do not help, nor do ill ones hinder our salvation." Therefore, was the inference, we have nothing to do but to wait for the motions of God's Holy Spirit.

That is never the doctrine of Paul; he told those

converted under him to Christ that they owed everything to the grace of God, that is, to his free and unbought goodness. All their privileges and hopes were from him; to him they must trace their experience; man of himself was nothing; he was indebted to God for his all; it is he that "giveth life and breath and all things"; and soul, mind, and strength are from him. To his grace we must look for a present piety and for our eternal happiness.

But note the inference which the Apostle draws from this truth. After saying to the Ephesians that we are saved by grace and not by ourselves, he adds: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Thus the grace of God, instead of conflicting with good morals, or rendering them unimportant, is made the very ground on which we should be the more earnest and active.

Mark, however, in what spirit our work is to be done. Never with self-reliance and pride; on the contrary, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." With fear,—not a servile and depressing fear, but an anxiety lest you should do too little, or work in the wrong way; "with trembling," with modesty, humility, and self-distrust.

And now comes the second point: why work? "For it is God which worketh in you." A singular reason! So have the world practically, and sometimes professedly judged. "Since God worketh in us both to will and to do," says indolent and erring

man, "we have manifestly no part nor lot in the matter of securing our own salvation. If we are to be saved, we shall be; God will effect it in his own time and manner." Not so the Bible. "Work out your own salvation, because God works in you"; a most encouraging direction. Work, not because you have the whole to do; in that case you might well sit down and fold your arms in discouragement and despair; but work, because the entire burden does *not* rest on your own shoulders; you have help, and it is no less than God who will help you.

This call is natural; it is just what a wise and good father would say to his children. "Do all you can, and for your encouragement I myself shall work with you." The father knows well that if he told his son he must work on and on alone, with none at his side, and no cheering word to help him forward, he would become dull and despondent, and accomplish but little. To bring out all his powers, and to make the most of him, he tells him he shall be assisted;—and by the very best possible hand and heart, even his own.

And how does God aid us in our salvation? He works in us. Some may ask, Why does he not work for us? Injudicious parents sometimes pursue this course; the mother, instead of teaching her daughters to do their own work, performs it all for them; and hence, if by Providence she is taken from them, or they are separated from her, they find themselves inefficient and helpless. Not so does our Divine Parent; just as a good and wise mother works *in*

her children, — training their minds, moulding their spirit, influencing and helping them to work for themselves, — so does God work in us; his Holy Spirit is interfused and blended with our affections, and becomes the soul of our souls, the life of our lives.

Note the force of each particular word of Paul: “God worketh in you to will.” The Spirit operates on the voluntary and motive powers of our inner man. We have many capacities and dispositions which are mechanical and instinctive, in common with the lower creatures. But above these lies the high and noble plane of our free spirit-nature. Outward things we feel able to plan and perform of ourselves; but the interior things of a pure and exalted righteousness, — these we are sadly conscious our own nature, unhelped and isolated, cannot achieve. To rise, especially, above the region of law, in which we act with restraint and sometimes with murmuring at our lot, and even, it may be, with moments of passion and resistance, and to come into that serene atmosphere in which we are no longer coldly conscientious, but love God, and obey him as our Father, obey him voluntarily, — this we cannot do unless our will be in unison with his; and that is never completely effected but by the co-operating influences of his gracious Spirit.

God works in us by fulfilling the blessed promise, “Draw nigh unto him, and he will draw nigh unto you.” There are moments when he works in us as we stand amid the grandeur and loveliness of nature; and then we rejoice in the companionship of

that Sacred Spirit whose temple is the universe. And if Doddridge and Cowper could see God in the smooth lawns of old England, and as they wandered by the hedge-row, or on the slow-winding streams of Avon or Cam, how much more may *we* in the lofty mountain-peak, and the majestic river, the boundless prairies, and the deep, dark forests of this western world. God works in us when we are able to break temptation's snare, spread through our lusts and appetites, and say to the evil spirit, "Get thee behind me"; in us, when we cherish a pure aspiration to lead a celestial life now, before we tread the shining courts on high; in us, when the full heart would fain break forth responsive to the shepherd-song, "Glory to God in the highest"; and in us, when our conquered selfishness yields for the hour to the broad strain, "Peace on earth, good-will to men."

And in the shade no less than the sunshine,—nay, more than ever,—his beneficent, all-bathing, all-sustaining Spirit worketh in us. When the disciples were in the midst of the sea of Tiberias, and the wind was contrary, and the night coming on, as they were toiling with their oars, and were apparently nigh sinking in the waves, Jesus made as though he would have passed by them; but soon he came to them with words of cheer; and the winds ceased, and they reached the shore in safety. Even so the Father, by delaying his mercies, or seeming for the moment to pass by us, would call forth our prayers for his help, and reanimate our faith, and brace our faltering will.

Do any ask how God can work within us? He almost reveals his method,—he certainly illustrates it by analogies,—in the body. We have in our animal frame involuntary organs, by which the lungs play and the brain operates, even while we sleep. Then and there it is that God takes possession of us, and is within our will. His mighty will works,—a majestic presence, an awful power,—works in us, on and on without ceasing. This it is which makes sleep, in the words of another, “a Divine gift, reserved” every night “by God for his beloved.”

Yet more; God works in us to do. Without him we can truly accomplish nothing; with him ever strengthening us, we can do all things. His power may be put forth in our minds and hearts, in rare cases directly, and independent of us. Of that we know little; but of another thing we are certain, that when we work ourselves, in any way, form, or degree, looking toward him, he at once works with us. God helps them that help themselves. Napoleon Bonaparte said, “He always observed that God helped the strongest battalions.” When man uses every faculty within him, and concentrates his powers, they are straitway increased. When we lean implicitly upon God, then we work in love, and we act from right principles; then we yield a cheerful obedience, and that purifies our motives; and now we work to the right ends, the good of man and the glory of God; this brings us into a union with that Divine Saviour who could employ even the Sabbath in needful tasks, with the attestation, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

Few of us, I think, have any just conception of the largeness and liberality of the Divine aid. Giving to others ourselves, as we do, only within limits, — and these how narrow, — and helping only in degrees, we cannot easily comprehend how God should do otherwise. He comes, we imagine, only with an occasional outpouring of his grace, and with here and there a special providence. But is it indeed so? What means the Scripture, “Unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think”? And not in power alone, but in love, the riches of his grace are absolutely unsearchable. Look on his benignant administration of the sun and stars, that he wheels so harmoniously through the universe, and then ask yourself if he who guides these worlds on their mighty courses without pause or mismovement will not “hold you by the attractions of his mighty heart” and the omnipotence of his blessed will.

God works not only around us in the stately step-pings of his creation, and in the march of history, and in our own outward experience, but much more in the ongoings of our secret soul, calling us to repent of our sins, giving us joy for every duty done and every trial borne, mingling with every day, whether of service or of selfishness, of grief or of gladness, of levity or of thoughtfulness, the effusions of his ever-active Spirit.

But here a doubt may spring up, “How can we be assured that God is with us, and that our course is right, and is approved and aided by him?” It cannot

be decided, I answer, by mere feeling. Sensations often deceive us; we may mistake a pleasurable excitement of the nerves for religious emotion; and even sympathy, excellent as it is in itself, may be too far relied upon. Not either by faith alone can we know that God is working in us. "The devils," we are told, "believe"; but it is only to "tremble" before God. Our faith must lead out to something broader and up to something higher, or it will be vain and delusive. When it prompts us to quit all contracted and selfish courses, and go forth at God's bidding over the deluge waters of life, and when we return, ask him to put forth his hand and take us in, — in from wanderings and error and sin, then is our faith accepted of Heaven.

Of all the tokens of God's presence and aid, none are so sure as the criterion given us by our Saviour. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Every genuine sacrifice for truth and duty, and every earnest effort to sustain the right, brings us consciously beneath the smile of our Father. When we can bear neglect and privation, or the success of a rival or the presence of an enemy, with composure, we may know that God is working in us. Many a noble spirit in exile, and many on the brink of martyrdom, have been cheered with a feeling of an invisible companionship and sympathy from on high. "The hymns of the Wesleys," it has been truly said, "thrown off under the daily experience of scorn and persecution, overflow in every line with the rich unction of this passionate devotion."

Are you troubled at the thought of the apparent insignificance of your best offerings to God? Consider it is not the amount of our service alone which keeps the Father near us. Christianity judges more by the quality than the quantity of our work; it does not make salvation consist in having done a certain number of good deeds, but in yielding implicitly to the teachings of God's Spirit in whatever we do. After resolving to barricade the heart against the invasions of selfishness, and preparing and even assaying to struggle and resist, we learn, as old Tauler tells us, that "what we can do is a small thing; but we can will and aspire to great things." And "what a man, with his whole heart and mind, loves, and desires, and wills to be, that he most truly is."

"Scorn not the slightest word or deed,
Nor deem it void of power;
There's fruit in each wind-wafted seed
That waits its natal hour."

Our persistent word, therefore, is this: "Work out your salvation." Do not simply begin a holy course with a new heart, but let the renewal go on. Not only love God, but yearn toward him till he has your whole heart. Form Christian principles, but rest not there; exercise them daily, until they are fixed like the everlasting mountains. Follow Christ in thought and deed, not afar off, but closely, so closely that it shall be your habit, loved, and constantly lived out.

Are you ever beset with a spirit of self-distrust? This comes, I fear, in many cases partly from a low conception of the power of Christianity itself. This

conception unhappily sometimes takes hold of the modest and humble, no less than those who feel sufficient of themselves to go beyond, or to dispense with it as a special revelation.

An idea has prevailed widely, and does still to some extent, that this religion is chiefly for the feeble-minded and weak. "It is adapted to the little child;—let him be taught its lessons and its prayers. Woman, too, is an inferior being, and she may attend to these subordinate matters, God, heaven, and the soul. There are men of an effeminate spirit, weak minds; and religion is well suited to their characters and capacities. But what have the strong to do with it? A full-grown, vigorous, energetic man, what is there in religion for him? To give his mind to that subject would only reduce it, and to bow his energies before it can only degrade him."

In no point has Christianity received more injustice from the world than in this; in no respect has it been so entirely misunderstood. For, instead of being feeble and inefficient, it is an element of power; and that too not in inferior degrees; it is an element of the very highest power.

Look at its origin; from whom did it proceed? It did not come from a child; it is not the production of some weak man, — no, nor of man in his strongest estate. It came from the mightiest Being in the universe, it was sent from Omnipotence itself. Christianity — let us judge it as we may, let it be honored or dishonored, not only when you regard it as a boundless blessing, but when you look upon it with

indifference, or even though considered in some lights as an evil to the race — came, you must see, from a source which can never be condemned for its feebleness. We cannot sink it so low in the scale of our speculations as to strip it, in its primal fountain, of an unprecedented and unapproached power.

And the messenger by whom it was sent, who was he? Whatever other qualities he might lack, no one ever so much as charged Jesus Christ with being weak. On the contrary, his word was always with power. His very air and manner so impressed the iron-minded soldiery of Imperial Rome, that though sent once to apprehend him, they dared not lay hands upon him. “Never man,” — this was the universal testimony, — “Never man spake like this man.” Not only did he rule the winds and the waves, and raise the very dead, but his whole life was a wonder-work. Move where he might, a virtue went out from him. On the shore, or in the boat, pressed by the throng, or in the shades of Bethany, — on the cross, or on the cloud borne back to his Father’s bosom, — everywhere all that he did and all that he endured gave tokens of power.

Yet more, the message he brought was stamped in its every line and letter with this same characteristic. It contained truths in their germs, it is true, level to the comprehension of a child; and yet opening up, and expanding until they task the most kingly intellect. Look at the long catalogue of Christian theologians, — Ignatius, Augustine, Jerome, Butler, Calvin, Edwards, Channing, — who, if not they,

have shown mental vigor? Who, if not they, have obeyed the Apostolic command, "In understanding be ye men"?

Proceed on to the religion itself, examine its fundamental principles, and elicit from them, if you can, anything to be despised for its weakness. We may possibly think its primitive promulgators, Peter, John, Paul, and their immediate compeers and successors, enthusiasts; they may be called by some persons fanatics; they were indeed so called while yet alive; they may be charged with sedition, heresies, or whatever else men please;—but to deny their power is to fly in the face of every act of their lives and every line of their biography.

Look again at their earliest converts; the moment one became a Christian, a spark was struck into him which set his whole being on fire. Out of weakness he became strong; he felt an invincible courage, and went forth to testify in the name of Christ at the hazard of his life. He did not fear crown or mitre; the Neros and the Ananias, rulers or people,—he was ready to encounter them all. God and his truth were with him, of whom should he be afraid? Principalities and powers, the law or the sword, it mattered not what was the array; he drew his weapons from the armory of Heaven, and he feared not the conflict. If the doctrine he had embraced was not true,—if the principles he promulgated were not destined to prevail, then he felt assured

"The pillared firmament was rottenness,
And earth's base built in stubble."

Christianity is clothed with power by the supremacy it gives to man's moral nature. It quickens the intellect, but not that alone, nor chiefly. It is a grand spectacle to see a man of gigantic mind, one who can grapple with any subject, however abstruse or complicated, whose thought can sweep round its whole compass and penetrate its every part; acute yet comprehensive, accurate in detail, and at the same time vast in combination, patient in logical deductions, of instinctive perceptions and of fire-winged imagination, — this is a grand spectacle.

But nobler still — this is the Gospel estimate — is the sight, if to this mental grasp be joined a moral greatness of commensurate proportions. Intellect is the foundation, granite-like, deep and sure. Yet what is it without its destined superstructure, high moral eminence? What but a mournful illustration, furnished age upon age, of that sad comment: "This man began to build, but was not able to finish"?

"Was not able," — Christianity alone bestows on man the ability to carry up and consummate his entire nature. The elder nations, India, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome, could rear men of powerful intellect; but there was none to wear the diadem of moral greatness. The ruins of Nineveh have brought to light, back of thousands of years, proofs of large mental culture; but not one ray of true spiritual light comes from that depth of ages. Before the Christian era it was only a broken shaft which was raised to commemorate man's highest inward worth.

The stature of perfection, moral as well as mental, is attained only by having Christ formed in the soul. This truth is illustrated by looking at some of its chosen fields of operation. For example, every attentive reader of the Scriptures must have noticed the special regard paid by our religion to the earlier periods of life. "I have written unto you, young men," says the beloved Apostle, and mark the reason, "because ye are strong." Christianity loves the young, because they, like itself, are full of elasticity and vigor. A young heart is a fountain of energy; let the mind be early irradiated by divine truth; let the principles be firm, independent, God-regarding and man-loving; let there be a steady resolution to do right in all things and lead others in the same high course;—and there will I point for an illustration of true power. It is a power before which earthly honors, crowns, and tiaras pale away; it is a power which lifts its youthful possessor into fellowship with him who once spurned a sceptre, and who trod the kingdoms of this world beneath his feet. It is kindred—I speak it with reverence—to Omnipotence itself.

No page of history is more gloomy than that which records the false views taken of the topic now under discussion. The great thirst of the ambitious has been for power. But what have been their conceptions of the highest attainable power? An outward dominion, a physical subjugation of their fellow-men. Alexander trembled lest the victories of his father would leave him nothing to achieve; he

wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. Weak mortal! Hadst thou lived a few centuries later thou mightest have heard "a still small voice" teaching thee to rule the kingdom within thee; and then the rivers of Babylon had not mourned thy untimely sacrifice to thy impotent lack of self-government.

It is Jesus Christ who gives man power over himself. Mere empire over others is a comparatively small thing. The sceptre of nations and the command of armies are but low positions compared with his who controls his own fiery impulses, and subjects his sensualized nature and every base-born passion to the dominion of Christian purity. To impart this energy is the main office of Christianity. It was given to educate our moral being; that is, to draw forth its latent forces, to enlighten conscience, to strengthen the moral will, to lift our better self into the spiritual throne. God in Christ was, and now is, the primal educator of the human race; he communicates his knowledge of all that is needed for our inward perfection. By the Holy Spirit he is still teaching us, not in set tasks and burdensome lessons, but by a generous culture and discipline,—one that does not overlay, but arouses our mental and moral capacities. All around us—who can doubt it?—are channels through which the Father is sending down streams to fertilize, vivify, and render everlastingly productive this immortal principle.

Christianity blends itself with every influence that touches this our passing and mortal life; and in

every scene it is a ministry of power. In our trials it clothes us with constancy, fortitude, and perseverance. It braces the soul in sickness, inciting us to self-control and patience. When loved ones are taken from us and the soul walks through dark avenues, Jesus is our comforter and strengthener. We desire ease and the uninterrupted gratification of our wishes and hopes, but the Father knows this is not best. And so he sends us disappointment and troubles. The bird of paradise, it is said, is obliged to fly against the wind, that its thick and gay plumage, pressing close to the body, may not impede its free movement. And we, too, that we may wing our way upward, must breast the winds of sorrow. God be praised for our trials, since it is through tribulation we gain spiritual power.

And not over ourselves alone, but over others, this blessed and elevating faith gives us a growing dominion. There is an energy in the Christian heart which the veriest worldling cannot but respect;—no one can comprehend and yet despise it. Look at one who, like Christ on the cross, can forgive an enemy. Some may mock him at first, and call him tame and mean-tempered; but others—and how the number constantly swells!—are subdued by such a spirit. In the words of old Beza, “The Church has to endure blows, not give them; but it is an anvil that has worn out many a hammer.”

In fine, Christianity is an element of power because it endows man with qualities not only pure, but reliable and permanent. By two simple agen-

cies, awakening in him a supreme love to God and a boundless love of his race, it develops every good property of which he is capable. What oxygen is to the blood, purifying and vitalizing it, that is religion to our spirit-nature. It is the life of the soul, calling forth in it all that is pure and effective, by shedding down on it a celestial energy.

And it does this not for a day, but for the untold ages; not by moods and spasms either, but with an influence steadfast as the heavens. One may be a formalist and change his modes of worship with every gust of caprice; but if he is an inward, thorough, Christian believer, you know in all changes where to find him. He is always a defender and supporter of religion and its institutions, a punctual and reverent worshipper; always a friend of his kind, helping the needy, sympathizing with the downcast, giving comfort to the comfortless; in one word, a man of consistent faith, a practical, everyday and everywhere good man.

Contemplate this noble spectacle, Christian power! What is there to be placed by its side? Without this, let us possess whatever else we may, — piles of gold that fill our walls, fame that sounds on every breeze, dominion in circles wide as the land, earthly comforts, all that heart can desire, so that we may lie on our couch and lift not a finger for toil, — possessing all these and yet destitute of Christian power, — power over ourselves, power to see and love God, power and the disposition to do good, at home, abroad, in season and out of season, — our

acquisitions are but as chaff driven before the wind. To be truly and permanently strong, we must be strong in the Lord and the power of his might.

Work out your salvation, then, conscious that while the all-perfect Spirit must always transcend immeasurably our finite nature, yet we can draw nearer and nearer to him through eternity. When you look on the glories of midsummer, consider it is he who is the inner Light that shines out through all things grand and beautiful. In human action it is his mighty energy that prompts whatever is heroic and noble. When life teems with pure joys, his is the power that calls forth our affections, and bathes the soul in its most exquisite delights. When sorrow comes, his is the only voice that can penetrate its mournful recesses and pour over it the oil of a redeeming solace. In all that exalts your being, lifting you above what is mean and base; in everything that binds you to the sacredness of duty; in all that blesses you amid your household loves, and in the society of the gifted and the good; and, above all, in that heaven-sent beam which shone from the cradle to the cross of Jesus Christ,—see in these, each and all, the inspiration of the Father. And inasmuch as he is ever working with you and in you, and striving to evoke your higher nature and deliver you from evil, and to break off your fellowship with sin, and win you to an ever-dearer communion with himself,—so does he charge you, as by the voice of angel and archangel, here and now, to-morrow and forever, to “work out your own salvation.”

XXX.

THE EVER-PRESENT CHRIST.

I WILL NOT LEAVE YOU COMFORTLESS; I WILL COME TO YOU.—

John xiv. 18.

WE are accustomed to speak of Christ as having passed into the heavens, and separated himself from us. He left his religion — this is the conception — behind him. He left also his example; and that is all. The living, operative Christ is no more on earth; and till we ascend up where he dwelleth, we shall never be permitted to enjoy his society, sympathy, and aid.

But is it indeed so? Have we only a dead Christ? Can we look at him only through the cold, bleak heavens, and as a distant and unapproachable being?

There is a presumption, on the threshold, against the truth of this view. When we think of the Redeemer, the heart craves his personal presence. Every church, so far as it has possessed any spiritual life, has pleaded for a near and intimate communion with its great Head. It was so in the Reformation; Luther, Melancthon, Knox, Zwingle, — all the leading men in that movement, dwelt continually on a living and ever-present Christ. This

has been the great anchor which held martyr, confessor, missionary, and saint in all ages. And have these, an uncounted multitude, who thought their Saviour verily at their side in the dark hours of trial, conflict, and grief, been grasping a mere phantom? I know it is said by many, "We do not need a present Redeemer; all we want is the aid of our omnipotent Father; to him we look and pray; of his helpful love we are always sure; and why ask for anything more?"

But this argument, so offered, proves too much; for if *we* do not need a present Saviour, neither was one necessary at all. God might have left the world as it had been from the beginning. The idea that "the Word" must be "made flesh, and dwell among men," was a delusion. Christ, born of Mary, living, teaching, and bleeding on the cross, was a superfluity.

The world before Christ did not argue in this way; age after age, heart and flesh cried out for a personal manifestation of the living God. He seemed to mankind too distant for their apprehension, their faith, and their love. They pleaded for a Saviour who should be born of God, and yet shine forth here below with a face radiating the Father.

Then, again, Christ is the Head of the Church, confessed on all sides to be its Head to-day no less than before his bodily ascension. But would the Father, by any probability whatever, take away the very Lord and Master, and leave the disciple a forlorn wanderer? Would he erect this noble edifice,

the Christian temple, and then remove its cornerstone from beneath it?

Yet more; it could not be but Jesus himself desired to be personally present with his followers in every age. His deep interest in our conversion and progress must have led him to yearn for a place around our path and about our pillow. He would fain ever and anon whisper a cheering word to his fainting followers, and breathe out a holy influence upon them. And the Father loves his dear Son too well to deny him that privilege.

Nor is there, as some imagine, any intrinsic difficulty in this nearness of Christ. He would not come as a cloud between us and the Father, dimming the light of his countenance, or drawing our hearts away from the love and the worship of God. On the contrary, he is a perfectly translucent medium. As an eminent Biblical critic once said to the writer, in Germany, holding up at the time a glass of water before him, "Christ transmits the light and love of God as freely as this water does the sunbeam."

If Christ was born as the New Testament describes, he must be, not what we are, but a "blood relation," if the phrase may be allowed, of the very God; and, therefore, he can continue his presence with us as no mere mortal could. If he is the brightness of the glory of God, instead of interfering with the Father, he is now and forever one with him, beaming upon us with an effluence inseparable from that of the ever-living One.

We feel always the need of persons about us; they exert an influence for which we can find no substitute whatever. The face of a friend imparts a power, strength, cheer, and solace to which no other can be compared. Better than his writings, more effective than the most confiding of letters, is his own presence. Are we compelled to forego this in our relations to Christ? With no epistle from his own hand, with not a line he ever penned, must we sit down and feed ourselves spiritually with his abstract qualities, with a cold record written by others, and written merely about him, or written even, every page of it, by the finger of inspiration? No, we want the Inspired himself constantly with us.

And this the New Testament assures us we have. True, indeed, so far as the senses are concerned, Christ went away from his disciples. No more did they look on those beaming features, or hear those thrilling tones. But Christ himself, that mysterious and Divine presence, he promised should be near them. "Lo, I am with you always." He knew well the power of this assurance; he foresaw that, when he was taken from them in the flesh, their hearts would sink within them. And so it proved; the hour soon came in which they could only recall his cheering voice from the caverns of memory.

"It fell, and fainted, and, like music past,
Hung in the ear, as some memorial song,
That will not leave us while we walk among
Old scenes, — although they whom we prized of yore
Now live, or haunt those pleasant spots, no more."

But the branches could not live when severed from the vine. Jesus did not separate himself from his disciples. He fulfilled his gracious promise: "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." When he had risen, and after he ascended on high, he showed himself still; he gave them a mouth and a wisdom to gainsay their adversaries, and shed on them spiritual gifts and miraculous endowments.

Nor was his presence confined to the Apostles; he was seen by Stephen when stoned to death, and by Paul at his conversion, and again when he gave him a special revelation, and on other occasions. He had promised "another Comforter," who should abide with his disciples forever. That comforter came; it was his own presence manifested, as it had before been when he breathed on the Apostles and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit." On the day of Pentecost, when three thousand had been converted, Peter affirmed it was through the agency of Christ. "Having received," said he, "of the Father, the Holy Spirit, he," Jesus, "hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." Thus was his presence unlimited as respected numbers.

It was equally so in regard to time. His last prayer was, not for those at that moment before him alone, but for all who in future ages should believe on him through their word; "that they may be one," is his language, "even as we are one, I in them and thou in me." His mediatorial office, according to that Apostle who communed with him so often in person after his ascension, was to continue

on to the end of all things, even until he had "put down all rule, authority, and power" opposed to himself. To accomplish this mighty work he must be, not away in the distant heavens, but with and in his own Church; for neither body nor spirit can operate where they are not present.

But many still contend that Christ has gone forever from this world. They tell us that when his religion was established then miracles ceased, and then the wonder-worker was no more with his followers. It has even been affirmed that the touching expression, "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," is "a mere figure of speech. The Father and the Son," it is said, "do not come to men personally; they are only manifested in their moral being, present to the heart. And this," it is said, furthermore, "is a more intimate acquaintance, and a far more inspiring union than could be formed by mere personal intercourse."

I do not and cannot so regard the Lord Jesus. This view of him, which not only banishes him from our presence, but makes our union with the Father "a mere figure of speech," seems to me as fatal in its moral effects as it is repugnant to the Scriptures. If the primitive disciples needed his presence and influence, we do still more. They — many of them, certainly — had enjoyed his society once, and the memory of his form and his voice might perhaps have sufficed their spiritual necessities. But no such memories are ours; and, with no faith in his

personal presence, the heart must often feel a void which neither doctrine nor precept, neither the letter nor yet the abstract spirit of Christ alone can fill. In our highest moments we yearn for a near intercourse with our beloved Master; we plead that he may himself come, and restore his blessed kingdom to the Israel of our affections.

Now it is no part of wisdom to repel such desires and aspirations. On the contrary, "Christ — not a dead Christ, such as is sometimes hung up in those mausoleums called cathedrals, but the living, reigning Christ of heaven and earth, living and reigning in every human heart that opens its everlasting gates to this 'king of glory' — should be cherished by the wise men of the West, as the wise men of the East brought unto him, when a babe, 'gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh.'"

The attempt has been made to substitute for every sentiment like the one in question the abstract laws of nature and the soul, — to approximate as near as possible an impersonal religion, to obliterate all traces of the life of Christ from the history of the world, and banish him not only from the present, but even from the past. So would some take away our Lord, and strive to wean us from him. But this experiment always has failed, and always must fail. A religion addressed to the understanding alone is rejected by the sensibilities and affections. Before we can truly receive God as our Father, he must come to us through the sympathies of our humanity; he must manifest himself "in the likeness of sinful flesh."

It should be no serious impediment to the doctrine of an ever-present Christ that it sets forth a connection between us and our Saviour to some extent mysterious. For so was, and is, the outpouring of that Holy Spirit which none of us on that account reject as incredible. We know not whence the Spirit cometh nor whither it goeth, and yet we are constrained to believe in its advent. I am well aware that the intellect will here remonstrate, and, Nicodemus-like, ask, "How can this be? What proof is there that the once-ascended Redeemer ever returned again to earth? How can he be present to the great company of his followers at once?" But we forget on how many other points we should have no religious faith at all, if we waited until the understanding could clear up everything. What is God? and where? How did he begin to exist? How can he exercise any providence over us? We cannot answer these questions, and yet we believe in God, in his self-existence, and his providence. Philosophy requires us to admit all facts in the spiritual world, as we do in the material, even though we cannot as yet explain them. Indeed, we do and must receive many truths of religion, as we constantly do truths on moral subjects, notwithstanding some difficulties attending them, difficulties perhaps, too, which no finite mind can perfectly solve. Enough for us that the heart craves a present Saviour, and that Jesus has uttered language which means plainly that he would continue with his Church through all ages, and would minister to the individual soul.

We believe, as we have elsewhere said, that in Christ our race have a Reconciler between faith and reason. But this conciliation does not of necessity place every truth of religion within our mental grasp. So far as reason can penetrate, it acts in strict harmony with faith; but there is a region of the instincts and affections higher and broader than the intellect can span. There are truths addressed to this part of our nature which do not contradict reason, but lie beyond its province. To accept such truths is not to bring on a conflict between faith and reason; it is simply to say, we believe that in some instances the logic of the heart may go beyond and above the logic of the head. To this class of truths belongs, we think, the one in question.

“Without me,” are Christ’s own words, “ye can do nothing.” And so it has always proved; make God an impersonal existence, and you slide into a subtle pantheism. Put Christ far from you, and you lose the very germ of his power and sway in your heart. It is remarkable how these doctrines run side by side. He who denies the personality of the Deity, and resolves the Eternal One into mere law, or an unconscious force, will deny also that Jesus Christ stood, either by nature or inspiration, essentially higher than Pythagoras, Plato, or Confucius. And we cannot retain firmly the likeness of a Father in heaven, beaming with love, and exercising a personal guardianship over us, and still join in the insane interrogatory, “What,” in any special

manner, "have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth?"

The truth set forth thus imperfectly lies, I believe, at the foundation of a spiritual vitality. A firm belief in it would quicken and energize the whole Christian community. This age, absorbed as it is in science and material nature, needs to see a personal Redeemer; not one who died eighteen hundred years ago, and went up to the skies, to sit forever there, inactive, and unconcerned in our salvation. We need to know and feel that he is on earth now, an unseen yet real presence. Such a faith would take our hearts off from this consuming worldliness, this incessant devotion to gain, fashion, party, power, — and to sin and death, — and fix them on the ever-near and ever-dear Saviour of our souls.

If the world needs it, the Church does still more. Why are many even of the professed followers of Christ so cold and numb? Among other causes this is prominent. We imagine ourselves following a dead Master; not one that "ever liveth," and is now with us, a glorified, invisible, yet actual presence. Did we believe this, these drowsy souls would start from their slumbers, and go forth full of life, full of love, full of work. As one looks out on the so-called Christian world, he sees in many quarters, not the bright Sun of Righteousness, calling forth life, bloom, vigor, health, but the dim twilight, as it were, of some arctic region. The great luminary of the Church is below the horizon, and we are wedged in the thick ice of a Christless religion, our faces

pale, our limbs rigid, death in our central being, and sterility all around us. When are we to leave this polar sea, and waft our way to the warm skies of a living faith? When shall we combine an earnest piety with a broad, sincere charity? Then, when we can each say, from the depths of our being, Jesus Christ, God-irradiated, God-exhibiting, is now at my side, the light of my eyes, the loved of my heart, the law of my life.

The professed Church of Christ now sees him, in how many cases, as the half-recovered blind man saw "trees walking." What she needs is to open her eyes fully, and she would behold the Lord shining round about her like the sun. She would look him in the face, listen to his word, and march on under this Captain of her salvation, scattering light in her way, her allies gathering in from all lovers of humanity, freedom in her van, and joy in her train, and to all upholders and enactors of evil "terrible as an army with banners."

The individual needs our doctrine. If we could each but realize that Christ is with us, it would purify, exalt, and hallow our whole mortal course. God help us to the precious faith that He who so loved those saintly friends at Nazareth, Bethany, and Jerusalem, loves us also; that he is ever on our right hand and our left, strengthening each good purpose, helping us in the dread conflict with sense and sin, pointing us to the cross, and whispering those words of cheer, "By this we conquer."

XXXI.

CHRISTIAN HEROISM.

THOU THEREFORE ENDURE HARDNESS, AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF
JESUS CHRIST. — 2 Tim. ii. 3.

MUCH of the grandest imagery of the Scriptures is drawn from the tented field. It is some compensation for the horrors of war that it suggests such elevated and inspiring language as this: "Take unto you the whole armor of God"; put "on the breast-plate of righteousness"; "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit"; "fight the good fight of faith."

And the parallel is very close between the good soldier and the good Christian. As the one is full of courage, intent on his duty, and in the hour of battle throws himself into the thickest of the fight, so does the other forego all effeminacy and ease, and surrender himself body and spirit to the great Captain of his salvation.

For the composition of a perfectly Christian character, many principles and many sentiments must be combined. Prominent among these is that embraced in the passage: "Endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." That is, be brave, be self-denying,

and obey strictly your Commander. This spirit I shall call Christian heroism.

To the heroic element we owe some of the sublimest manifestations of human nature. It is the spring of many of the most touching effusions of literature; this is the fountain at which blind old Homer drank, and whence flowed that holier inspiration breathed forth in the strains of sightless Milton. To this we owe the divine songs of Doddridge. Cowper also was trained by the Gospel tactics of a stern personal experience; giving us the sweet embodiment of metrical devotion as the result of his inward conflicts; illustrious in his spiritual victories, and hardly less illustrious in his spiritual defeats. A true Christian heroine was Felicia Hemans, in whom genius and sorrow met together; and some of whose holiest and most heart-steeped effusions were wrung from her own sad lot. Numerous, indeed, are they who have written gloriously out of the bitterness of tribulation. Many are they who

“Learn in suffering what they teach in song.”

“Endure hardness,” — what other motto should the disciple of Jesus Christ adopt? No one will question that the foundations of our holy religion were laid in this temper. The Author and Finisher of our faith led a life of constant self-sacrifice; and he crowned it by pouring out his blood freely on the cross. The chief of his Apostles passed through a long series of labors, perils, and pangs; he was more than once imprisoned, and he suffered shipwrecks,

and perils among friends, and perils among enemies ; he was stoned, and beaten with rods, and finally died a martyr to Christ. And to what did the noble band of its founders, confessors, and defenders owe their resistless progress and power ? It was not by sheltering themselves from danger, and by shunning all hardships, that they gained a place and a name for their Master. It was by constant toils and sufferings ; they were reviled and spit upon ; every form of insult, every engine of torture, and every mode of death were devised to crush them. But they did not blench or quail ; and despised and scoffed as they then were, what is their rank now ? Their names are set as a diadem on the brow of humanity ; their voice at this hour sounds out in all portions of the earth. High and low now hear it ; kings bow at its mention ; rulers are constrained to listen to it in their legislation ; the poor and the sorrowing joy in it. It is a voice which enables all who obey it to triumph in the last mortal hour, and to convert "the king of terrors" into an angel of light.

Indeed, we can trace directly from the Master and through every age, in unbroken force, this same heroic element. The line of the martyrs has extended down century upon century. Read the record of the ten persecutions in Rome, of those of the Albigenses in France, and the Waldenses in Piedmont, and of the inhumanities practised toward the Protestants in Germany, Poland, and Spain ; sum up the long list of Wickliffe, Huss, and Jerome of Prague, of Becket, Ridley, Latimer, Rogers, and their illus-

trious compeers. Time would fail us to tell of all who have "endured hardness" even unto death as soldiers of the cross.

And not in death alone, but by a living martyrdom, has the spirit of heroism been displayed. Open, if you please, the missionary record. Let the summons be to go east or west, to arctic regions or to the torrid zone, every duty was manfully performed and every danger bravely met. And in our own age, as has been justly said, "when a terrible pestilence passed round the globe, and when medical succor was not to be purchased with gold, when even the strongest natural affections had yielded to the love of life, even then the self-immolating minister of the cross was found by the pallet which physician and nurse, father and mother had deserted, bending over infected lips to catch the faintest accents of contrition, and holding up to the last before the expiring penitent the image of the expiring Redeemer."

Look at the religion itself. What is it, according to the New Testament, to follow Christ, to be a good soldier under his command? Is it compatible with self-indulgence and ease? Nay, begin to enumerate the Gospel qualities, and you cannot go through the first page of its requisitions before you are met by that stern mandate, "Deny thyself." You may follow Democritus or Epicurus with a luxurious indolence, but you cannot follow Jesus Christ a single hour except you endure hardness.

Christianity represents human life as a warfare between the flesh and the spirit. And we can sub-

due the one and give ascendancy to the other only so far as we are filled with a moral heroism. Self-indulgence never controls the appetites; it imparts no fortitude, no manliness or womanliness, but keeps one in this regard always a child. It makes its victim too inert to care even for the physical nature; he desires to be in health, but is too indolent to leave his pillow and breathe in life and health from the morning breeze, too irresolute to exercise his limbs, too faint-hearted to practise ablutions. And the mind and the morals, too, not seldom decline with the body, and the whole being becomes miserably degenerate.

Even heathen wisdom teaches that to possess character we must endure hardness. In both the Greek and Latin languages the word courage is correlative with virtue, and effeminacy is synonymous with vice. And this association is not unnatural; for all that is highest in our nature, and everything that is noblest in human conduct, utter the solemn warning against moral timidity and spiritual slothfulness; they bid us, by every gift of our nature and by every hope of the future,

“Through all the warfare of our life,
To tread resistance down.”

And, if at any moment our hearts faint or falter, we are to re-nerve them with the thought, that they

“Who perish in the strife
Shall wear the martyr’s crown.”

Some, I doubt not, may regard a call of this kind

as impertinent to our position. Apostles might and ought to deny themselves, and maintain for Christ's sake an heroic temper, but why exhort us to this stern course, this rigid self-sacrifice? I answer, that it is as hard now to keep close to the Redeemer as it was ten centuries ago. It is as hard in New England as it was in Rome or in Palestine.

Look at the case and see if it be not so. Take our relation to others;—to be a full Christian one must be a hero in society. What, for example, is so needed as moral courage, courage to do right where the many do wrong, courage to be open, frank, truthful, and plain-dealing, yet kind, to all persons? To do this one must sometimes oppose a brave front to neglect, to ridicule, to persecution for the right's sake. We need heroism that we may put on no false appearances, but consent to pass in all cases for just what we are. We want heroism, if we are rich, to clothe ourselves in humility, and become in spirit servants unto all; we want heroism, if we are poor, to consent to appear so before others. To be always strict with ourselves, and patient and forbearing toward others, to practise economy that we may also practise generosity, to take less than justice and give more than justice,—this is Christianity; and it calls, I contend, for the very spirit of martyrdom.

He who is content to be a semi-Christian will clothe himself in soft raiment, shun danger, shrink from toil, elude responsibility, and deprecate hardships and suffering. Where evil report threatens, he will be a reed shaken with the wind. Whenever we de-

sert the banner of the Lord, we seek smooth paths listen to the enchanting voice of personal ease, and never endure, but dread and flee from all hardness. To be a complete disciple, a good soldier of Christ, one must keep an eye upon him, drink of his cup, and be baptized with his baptism. Over and over we must bend our ear to that trumpet-call, "Take up thy cross and follow me."

It is quite apparent that we need Christian heroism in the family. Its wants cannot be all provided for, its order maintained, and each inmate receive his portion in due season, unless some one at least of the household endure hardness. There is somewhere a laboring oar; were there not, confusion, negligence, and discomfort would reign through the dwelling. The children may be selfishly indolent, but the parent must then toil. There is at this moment many a mother made little less than a martyr by a servile devotion to self-indulgent and thankless sons and daughters. Pray God that the heroic element may pass down and pass through every grade and relation of our homes.

We all find that in days of sickness and bereavement we must need be Christian heroes. We can bear sharp trials in no other spirit; a self-seeking temper robs one of all energy in the hour of trouble. When we are called to the fire-baptism of sorrow, we are cleansed from the pollutions of sloth and mean desires; and out of the roots of personal woe there springs up for us the tree of life.

Earlier or later the dread sentence is pronounced

on each separate soul: "Thou shalt bear thine own burden." Nor father, nor mother, nor companion, nor friend, can enter the precincts of our deepest grief. We must brace ourselves up, not with a stoical insensibility or an unsanctified pride, but with a tender reliance on the Father, and then, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, endure the hardness of our lot.

Never was the temper I describe more needed than now. Looking the land over we can see that in our country's prosperity there has been a growing disposition to refine away the strict demands of Christianity, and make inclination and not duty the rule of our lives. Personal ease and personal comfort, mere happiness, has been too often the end and aim with us all. We have been fast losing the martyr spirit; a subtle selfishness has blent itself in our domestic training and in our modes of education, stealing away all true manliness, all Christian heroism from the hearts of our children and youth. The grand inquiry has not seldom been, not how can we best help ourselves, but what can we get done for us? Not how can we best serve others, but how extract most service from them?

But will a race so trained, or rather not trained at all, but enfeebled and made helpless by a mistaken indulgence and a culpable neglect of all discipline, will these fill the places, perform the tasks, and bear the hardships of their self-denying parents? Nay, the command of Christ, the command of nature is unalterable as God and the soul: "Endure hard-

ness"; — begin early, continue long and late, in mind and body, in heart and life,—endure hardness, for so only can you be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

Life is not a summer sea, it is not all down, and zephyr, and silk; it has its joys deep and broad, but it has also its tasks, and it was to perform these that we were placed where we are, and endowed as we are. True religion is always in earnest; it is tender and yet it is brave. In our interior man there should ever lie a sweet softness. But it should not be an inert softness; it should lie in us like the waters of Horeb, ready, when the rod shall smite, to pour forth and carry life and health in its flow. We are not to evade toil and throw burdens on others, but to stand ourselves in the "imminent breach," and with an heroic steadfastness do the very hardest that must anywhere be done. That is the mark set before us. "To him that overcometh," so runs the high promise,—not to the timid, irresolute, and indolent, but "to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life."

Where are we to look for the genuine patriot? To the school of luxury and ease? Who were the founders of this Republic? Men who shrank from toil, perils, and hardships? Were they a pusillanimous and self-serving race? It is a dishonor to their names to raise these questions. The cornerstone of this world-renowned temple of freedom consisted of moral heroism. Such have been the foundations of every similar edifice in all ages of

the world. "When my blood is shed on the block," said the Spartan Vane on the scaffold of Tower Hill, "let it, O God, have a voice afterward." And it did have a voice ; and so will every drop of blood shed like his, for God and liberty. So will all sincere self-sacrifice, that looks neither to personal elevation alone, nor yet to party aggrandizement, but to the single good of one's country, to the extension of principle, private and public, and the perpetuity of civil and religious freedom. It is this, the heroic temper, and nothing below it, that can enhance the true weal either of the individual or the nation ; and this therefore alone deserves the sacred name of patriotism.

The topic I have selected is appropriate especially to our position at this moment. To our self-seeking nation, who have been living for ease, gain, and aggrandizement, I believe God is addressing a summons to rouse ourselves and gird on the armor, first of all things, of Christian heroism. "Now," said a patriot who died just before the birth of this Republic, "now is the time to summon every aid, human and divine, to exhibit every moral virtue, and call forth every Christian grace. The wisdom of the serpent, the innocence of the dove, and the intrepidity of the lion, with the blessing of God, will save us." To-day, brethren, we find ourselves forced into the same awful exigency with the fathers of the Revolution, and a conflict seems before us hardly less stern while it shall last than theirs. God give to rulers and commanders, and to our soldiers and seamen, the noble spirit of Christian heroism ; God infuse that spirit

among the whole people. Our cause is just ; all efforts at conciliation have been set at naught, and we have been driven to the solemn alternative, either to abandon our government itself, and let the precious heritage of our fathers, the hope of ourselves and our children, the last hope of struggling and oppressed humanity the world over, be trampled in the dust, or resort to the sword to maintain our free institutions and our dear country. Let us then stand heart to heart and shoulder to shoulder, through the contest ;— calm, just, free from violence and cruelty, but as firm as our broad mountains, and as united as our mighty rivers when they blend in the deep. And God grant that a new patriotism and a land-embracing union of all brave and free souls be the right arm which, under God, shall lead to ultimate victory, justice, freedom, order, and peace.

XXXII.

THE BROAD CHURCH.

THAT IN THE DISPENSATION OF THE FULNESS OF TIMES, HE
MIGHT GATHER TOGETHER IN ONE ALL THINGS IN CHRIST. —
Ephesians i. 10.

THE peculiar function of the Apostle Paul was to declare that in Christ Jesus no distinction of country, class, or condition would be recognized, and to gather the Gentile world into that fold hitherto occupied by the Jew alone. The key-note of his ministry was peace; his prime office was to bring together those who for whatever reasons had been hitherto separated.

Paul preached everywhere of love and unity; affirming that at the altar of the new faith, the wise and the simple, the noble and the ignoble, the scholar and the peasant, were to join hands. No more should the speculations of the head bring a winter over the heart; religion was not to be a mere theme for lonely meditations, or an instrument for self-culture alone. It was to quicken also the sympathies, to bring those who worshipped in one name to treat each other as brethren, to condemn none as below, and to cower before none as above their own broad level.

Christianity commands that we never glory in man's wisdom, and that we "comfort the feeble-minded"; and, with a mother's adaptedness, it reveals its deep things even unto babes. But it also favors the cultivation of the intellect. Its language is, "In understanding be ye men." It addresses itself to the able thinker, encouraging the union of reason and faith. It is no tender plant, needing the soft air of the conservatory, but it can bear the keen blasts of unbelief and the chills of scepticism, shrinking from no opponent, open or secret. It challenges assault, and confronts fearlessly the subtile Julian and the captious Voltaire. It does not blench before the sharp eye of modern research; and at every tribunal it stands up with a manly response. It has met the test of a thorough Biblical scrutiny; and the clearer the light thrown on its records, the fairer shines out its divine truth. Philosophy — natural, intellectual, and moral — has sought to bear it down; but with such defenders at its side as the Lockes, the Newtons, and the Edwardses of the past, and their compeers of the present, it still stands erect. Beneath its mighty dome all classes, the strong and the weak, find a common shelter and support.

Is it asked by what means and methods our religion brings men together? Primarily, I answer, by the stress it lays upon practical piety. In the early ages of history the burden of religion consisted in form and ceremony. And these have inherently a disuniting tendency; a rite, nay, the mode of a rite, has often sundered men, and kept them perma-

nently apart. But Christianity protests against this course: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything"; to eat meat offered unto idols is no sin before God;—to worship facing the east does not save the soul; it is neither baptism with little or much water that decides our claim to be Christians. No; the criterion goes far deeper than this; it penetrates into the very heart, and takes cognizance of the whole life.

So long as you direct attention to a ritual or to imposing ceremonies as the one thing needful, instead of gathering men together in Christ, you drive them more and more apart; they cling each to his peculiar tenet with a growing tenacity. Altar is set up against altar, and neighbor is parted from neighbor, for reasons which, in the broad and clear light of Christ, must put every one to the blush. Indeed, the wheel, the rack, and the stake, have drawn most of their victims from this quarter; controversy about trifles has been the prolific parent of sectarian strifes and personal alienations.

The Christian dispensation was given to lead our race in precisely the opposite direction. Its chief aim and work was, not to multiply and magnify matters of contention, but to build one broad platform for harmony and union. And this could be accomplished only by making the essential, saving thing a practical concern. A rock of offence has been zeal for speculations and theories. But, going back to the Gospel itself, we find that is not its method. Instead, for example, of requiring us to

determine the metaphysical nature of God, on pain of everlasting woe, it calls us simply to love God. Instead of demanding that we decide whether Jesus Christ was coexistent with the Father, it bids us honor him as our Saviour, and be moved to faith by his life, his sacrifices, and death ; it calls us through him to become reconciled in heart and character to the Father. And instead of exhausting our energies on the question of human depravity, it commands us to repent of and forsake our sins. We may speculate and controvert one another as we please, so we do not denounce bitterly our opponent in belief ; but, after all, error of opinion is less perilous than an uncharitable temper, for that is practical unbelief.

Now it is no further than we all come to see and abide by this momentous truth, that we can be gathered into one. It presents the only platform on which the various sects and denominations can ever meet. As in society there can be no union and sympathy except where the conflicting classes, setting aside the points which would part them, come together on the broad ground of a common humanity, and constitute one great middle class, so it is in christendom. We shall be brought into the one family of Christ Jesus only by waiving non-essentials, and consenting to join hands, so far as we can, in essentials, that is, in the plain, uncontroverted, practical principles of our religion.

I remark next, that the New Testament itself presents a middle ground between the extremes of

the outbranching theologies. It would lift up the deist to a belief in the supernatural, and the mere speculatist to a faith of the affections and conscience; it would bring the spiritually minded to admit the authority and value of reason. And in so doing it acts in harmony with nature, obeying that great law of restrictions to which all material forces are subject. Adopting its counsel, we shall take the golden mean, and fear not the charge of being "too liberal" because we deny some of the dogmas of the past. Nor yet shall we care for the allegation "too orthodox" because we accept, if we find them in the Scriptures, such doctrines as that of impure propensities born in man, the need of a change of heart, of paying honor to Christ as the only complete way of salvation, and the necessity of the Holy Spirit to convert the soul to God.

There is a path wide enough, — to deny this is to make God the author of bitterness and strife, and not the God of peace, — there is a path wide enough for all. On the banks of the Kennebec is a beautiful pine grove, dedicated to God, by the lamented Judd, under the name of "Greenwood Church." There it stands, with no narrow walls to enclose it, and no thick canopy above; but God's free earth around, and his free air above, an emblem of the one great Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I looked on those tall pines, and heard the organ music made through them by the winds, I felt a new desire that such should be the Church of this age. An angel form seemed to float over that green roof, proclaim-

ing benedictions on the faithful of every creed and every communion. And why has not that benediction met a universal response? What has so long sundered, and kept apart, those who should have rejoiced to walk together? So far, I reply, as there have existed radical differences of faith and doctrine the separation has been natural and proper. But this difference has in all ages been unduly magnified.

The divisions and subdivisions of Christendom may be charged, in no small degree, to three causes. First, to the language used in defining points of belief. My neighbor speaks of salvation by "grace," I may prefer the word favor; but because I employ that word he charges me with denying the doctrines of grace. Instead of using the word "atonement," which means simply at-one-ment, that is, reconciliation, and occurs but twice in the New Testament, I employ the Scriptural phrase "reconciliation to God" through Christ, and straitway he alleges that I reject the atonement. If I speak of an inborn proclivity or propensity to evil, it is naught; I must say, man is "totally depraved"; and yet, let him expound his language, and he will probably say what he means is that man is by nature destitute of holiness; and that I believe. Beyond question our opinions on these topics do in some respects differ; but be that difference large as it may, let the Christian world lay aside their technical phraseology, and express their sentiments on theology in the language of common conversation, and multitudes who now worship apart would see a brother

where they had looked hitherto only for an opponent.

Secondly, much of our alienation must be ascribed to a love of controversy. This passion is inherent in human nature. It is rife in politics; it runs through ethics, science, art, literature, every subject indeed, speculative or practical. Some enjoy contention and strife; they relish antagonism, debate, victory, and triumph. They will submit to anything rather than agree with their neighbor; hence the most trivial points have often caused the widest divisions. Add to this that religion is the most exciting, because the most momentous, subject of thought, and we can perceive easily how the love of controversy will always batten on its dogmas; and we see hence where lies the root of not a few of these multitudinous branches of the Church.

Again, there is a love of power which leads some to burn for new sects over which they may preside. It would be a curious investigation, could we pierce human motives, to read the inward heart's history of the Church, from the strife between James and John and Peter, which should be accounted greatest in Christ's kingdom, down through the long line of Pope and anti-Pope, Church and no-Church, primate, presbyter, cardinal, minister, and elder, reviewing all impartially, Catholic and Protestant, Old School and New School, Orthodox and Liberal, clergy and laity, and to know, by an all-penetrating ken, what schisms and heresies, what divisions into sects and clans, must be traced to an unhallowed ambition for power.

Eliminate all real difference on essentials, and you have an host of causes and occasions of disunion still left. Pride of opinion, personal dislikes, alienation from some clergyman or influential man in a church or a parish, family connections, early education, the force of habit, temporal interests, such as business affairs and political aspirations, private friendships, fear of a name, attachment to old views because they are old, and love of new views as such, regard to convenience, personal temperament, general culture, pleasure taken in a particular church edifice, its choir, or its ritual,—how many influences beside a broad and honest diversity of opinion have made us seem to differ far more than we really do. Sweep away every merely adventitious circumstance, and let all join hands who inwardly join mind and heart in their faith, and verily the wolf and the lamb would come together, and the clang of the trump ecclesiastic would be exchanged for the silvery notes of “Glory to God, and on earth peace.”

To attain this blessed consummation we must guard every avenue to excess and exclusiveness. We believe ourselves to possess more of the truth as it is in Jesus than any other sect. But we have not yet reached the whole truth; every denomination has some portion of it; and that we should seek out, and gratefully accept. As King Solomon, in erecting the temple at Jerusalem, brought together treasures from the East and the West;—as he levied on the cedars of Lebanon, the gold of Ophir, and the ivory of Ethiopia;—so does the fair-minded Chris-

tian gather tributes from every sect and every name, believing that while no one of them has the truth unadulterated by error, every genuine branch and each true mind has a part of it; and that whenever by common consent we shall lay Jesus Christ as the chief corner-stone, then all the building, fitly framed together, will grow into a temple holy and complete.

When I say, however, that no one church has the whole truth of God, I would by no means encourage an indifferentism to all truth. I would put in no plea for an indolent ignorance; still less would I countenance any known and avoidable error. We need a positive theology, as clear views of God and Christ, of our duty and destiny, as we can reach. These we must indeed have to save us from mysticism on the one hand, and fanaticism on the other. It is our bounden duty to search the Scriptures, and by the light of God's spirit and our own best powers ascertain what is good and true, and hold it fast without wavering.

But still it is not, after all, simply the abstract truth we attain, important as that may be, which of itself brings us into the fold of Christ. It is not *what* a man believes, so much as how and why he believes what he does, that determines his claim before Christ. There is a "spirit of truth" which is far more influential than any mere doctrinal opinions. It is not, in fine, error itself that most jeopardises the soul; it is "the spirit of error."

The true member of Christ's body is not known by his professions alone, nor yet by the name he

bears, nor the church with which he worships. His prominent characteristics are these: First, a personal dedication to God, as his Father, and to Christ as his Redeemer. Next, an active, earnest, ever-inquisitive mind. He does not slumber and sleep over divine truth, content with his present acquisitions; still less does he arrogate all knowledge and piety to himself. No; he stands always a watchman on the wall, impatient of the night, and intent to catch the first ray of Heaven's holy light. Such a man may have actually discerned but little as yet in regard to Trinity and Unity, depravity or atonement; he may see through a glass darkly; but he is still a seeker. And is it not more true of our heart wants than of our mental cravings, that earlier or later, here or hereafter, they who seek shall find?

Thanks that we live in an age friendly to a Christian union, to be effected by independent and earnest thought. The strong minds of the day, intent on God's pure word, as they approach from their various positions the central truths of Christianity, are drawing nigh to one another. While the material world is being brought into close and still closer union by the rail-car and the steamship, the spiritual world are learning from it that union is power. I have just witnessed in my own city the singular spectacle of a series of meetings through the week held by the Roman Catholic Church, and attended by some of the features of the long-practised "revivals of religion" common among various sects of Protestants. Is this a mere imitation? Is it not

rather one among many other indications that even the most staid of the old and venerable churches feel the breath of some new confederate gale that is to sweep over the earth, wide and yet wider, not to destroy, but to breathe fresh life into the Church universal, and to inaugurate that blessed era foretold by our Saviour, when his disciples shall be one even as he is one with the Father?

And for the "revivals of religion," so termed, it is interesting to notice that, with all their errors and excesses, they are doing much in some quarters to promote practical religion. In the city of London, for example, where it is estimated that no less than two hundred and fifty thousand converts have recently been made, distilleries are being closed, and the inebriate are reformed, duties on smuggled goods have often been refunded, lawsuits have greatly diminished, and in places once noted for their profanity not an oath is now heard. Let these good fruits become general and permanent, and, we say, may such revivals be multiplied from shore to shore, till time shall be no more.

Who could have predicted twenty-five years since that at this day the doctrine of infant perdition would have been indignantly denied? nay, that our fathers should be defended against the charge of ever having held it? nay, still more startling, that even John Calvin himself should be to-day vindicated against this tenet? Or who could then have imagined the time was so near when a large and increasing section of our Universalist brethren would

abandon that dogma which rejects all retribution beyond the moment of death? Such changes should be hailed with joy by every friend of truth, liberality, and progress.

It can be no mere dream we entertain of an approximation to some common ground, when we not only read of revivals in what are termed the "Evangelical" sects, but are having from time to time unions of churches of our own faith for conference and prayer; and when we meet with items also in many liberal journals of a "growing religious interest," "additions to the Church," and "family worship set up in households," among the denominations they represent. Whatever may be our strictures on an excess of religious meetings through the week, we cannot but welcome an increase of healthy piety and practical goodness through all the denominations in the land. God bless every demonstration of pure and undefiled religion the world over.

Rome has her seven Basilicas, typical of the seven churches of Asia; and these are a type of the many churches of this age in the one city of our God. As we look over their borders, we can detect what we think errors in them all. We admire the works and the patience of Ephesus, and yet we have somewhat against her. And so of all others. But still, in every church, Romanist and Protestant, orthodox and heterodox, the great Shepherd will find some of his own. The doctrine may be somewhat erroneous; the administration is not perhaps such as we approve;

certain rites may be unduly exalted; the feelings may be made of disproportionate importance and the intellect repressed; still, the defect may be venial; for the only fundamental requisition of Christ is that the heart be right, and that we be all of one spirit. Then, however diverse our beliefs, we belong to the one household of God.

Glorious household! To-day have been heard, sounding out through the all-blending atmosphere, from the lofty cathedral down to the lowliest church-tower, peal answering to peal of the Sabbath bell. Our altars stand apart; but the incense of one hallowed devotion mingles over them all. We are parted by external walls; but Christian hearts can pierce the wood and stone, and meet in sweet fellowship. From city to city, and from village to village, resounds the blessing of our common Lord and Master, "Peace be upon you." Among the sincere disciples of Christ over the wide realm of Christendom, land responds to land, "We are brothers in the faith; let us pledge heart and hand, and pray for the spread of the one true Church." So may it be; let heaven descend, and let earth ascend, until the holy union shall receive its full and final consummation; and let all the people say, Amen.

THE END.

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